

INSPIRATION AND THE ELLEN G. WHITE WRITINGS

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Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings

Two groups of articles published in the *Adventist Review* are reproduced in this reprint—the first, a series of four articles published under the title “Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration,” appeared in issues dated January 12, 19, 26, and February 2, 1978; the second series, published under the title “The Ellen G. White Historical Writings,” appeared in the issues of July 12, 19, 26 and August 2, 9, 16, and 23, 1979.

Accompanying the articles is a statement by the editor of the *Review*, Kenneth H. Wood. The statement has been adapted from an editorial published originally with the second series of articles.

Ellen White's experience and writings

How do Seventh-day Adventists understand inspiration? Is the Seventh-day Adventist concept different from concepts commonly held?

In several aspects the Adventist concept is different. It partakes neither of the modernistic, liberal views that destroy the authority of God's Word nor the ultraconservative views that make the prophet a mere automaton—a machine, as it were—speaking or writing words he is impelled to utter or to record.

As Seventh-day Adventists we are uniquely fortunate in approaching this question. We are not left to find our way, drawing our conclusions only from writings penned 19 centuries and more ago, which have come down to us through varied transcriptions and translations. Concerning inspiration, with us it is an almost contemporary matter, for we have had a prophet in our midst.

What is more, rather than having in our possession only relatively short documents or a handful of letters, as is the case with the extant records of the Bible prophets, we have the full range of Ellen G. White writings penned through a period of 70 years, embodying her published books, her 4,600 periodical articles, and her manuscripts, letters, and diaries. We have also the testimonies of her contemporaries—eyewitness accounts of those who lived and worked closely with her. Both she and they discussed many points touching on the visions and on the manner in which the light was imparted to her, and how she, in turn, conveyed the messages to those for whom they were intended. In other words, the eyewitnesses discussed the operation of inspiration.

Further, she wrote in a modern language, so a large

number of people today can study her writings in the original language, without needing to depend on a translation. Rarely, too, is it necessary to depend upon a transcription.

If we accept Ellen White as an honest witness, then her observations concerning her work, her statements on inspiration, and her declaration as to the work of the prophets of old are particularly significant to us. Thus what she has said of the work of the prophet in action can well form a basis for arriving at an accurate understanding of inspiration.

We shall discuss the subject as she did without resorting to theological language or definitions.

First of all, we should note that when the Lord imparts light to the prophets He does not confine Himself to one fixed procedure. "God . . . in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1). Therefore, one must not look for a uniform pattern that will govern all the procedures in this matter of God's giving His messages to human instruments. This is an important point.

Second, the prophet is a normal human being with all the faculties possessed by such a being. He sees, hears, smells, meditates, reads, eats, sleeps, worships, speaks, and travels, as do other people. At the time of his call to the prophetic office he may or may not be well informed in some lines of knowledge. All through his life subsequent to his call to the prophetic office, he continues to gain information in most matters in the same manner in which we all obtain such information. Being called to the prophetic office does not blot from his mind information gained in past experiences, nor does it block his mental faculties from continuing to obtain information as he did before his call to the prophetic office.

Being called in a unique manner to the service of the

Important Articles About Ellen G. White

Some subjects are of special interest to spiritually-minded people. One of these is inspiration/revelation—how God, an infinite, transcendent Being, communicates with His earthly children.

The *Adventist Review* in two series of articles from the pen of Arthur L. White has brought to the attention of Seventh-day Adventists certain phases of this important subject. The first, a series of four articles titled "Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration," was published in January and February, 1978, and the second, a series of seven, was published in July and August, 1979, under the title "Ellen G. White's Sources for the Conflict Series Books."

Because of the intense current interest in these matters,

and to make these articles available for continued study, the two series of articles have been brought together in this reprint.

In the 1978 series, Elder White, then secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, has written from decades of firsthand experience in working with inspired documents. In these four articles he clarifies some of the concepts necessary for a better understanding of how inspiration operates.

In the second series of seven articles, he takes us behind the scenes to show how Ellen White worked in preparing the books that present the great controversy story, and provides new, carefully documented information and insights on some aspects of the working of inspiration in the experience of Ellen G. White as she prepared her historical writings. We believe that every reader, no matter how well informed on the way inspi-

Lord as a prophet, he is in a position to receive special information from God. This may be in the fields of theology and religious experience. It may be in the field of history, recounting the special guidance of God for His people or for individuals, or warning of the perils incident to Satan's determination to destroy the work of God or the hope of souls. It may be in the field of physiology, nutrition, or hygiene. It may be in the realm of eschatology. It may be in the field of education or church administration. It may be in the revealing of hidden sins.

The fields in which information may be imparted are without limit, for the work is in God's hands. This experience is uniquely that of the prophet. Although the Spirit of God may speak to the hearts of all consecrated persons, not all are or can be prophets. God alone selects the prophet. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Visions and bearing testimony

A prophet may receive visions during the day, accompanied by certain physical phenomena (see Dan. 10), or in the night season, in a prophetic dream (see Dan. 7). After the vision the prophet imparts to others what was intended for them, either orally, in interviews, or in writing.

Thus there are two elements or procedures: "There is the receiving of the information and the bearing of testimony—the presentation by the prophet of the message, the light, the information—he received from the Holy Spirit.

He may not be at liberty to impart at once some of the information he receives. Perhaps it is to be held until certain developments have taken place; or perhaps the light is given fully to orient the prophet, but he is not at liberty to disclose all that is revealed to him.

His mind thus becomes a reservoir or "bank," as it were, from which, when circumstances demand, he is ready to speak forth. Often there is immediate need for the message.

ration works, will learn something from these articles.

Not all the material is new, of course. The elements that are repeated are included chiefly for two reasons—to present a balanced picture and to provide information that readers may have missed in previously published books and REVIEW articles.

Four facts should, perhaps, be kept clearly in mind as one reads these articles. 1. *Inspired writings do not come to us "untouched by human hands."* They are not written by God and handed to us as were the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. In communicating God's messages to the human family, the inspired writer involves himself in much hard labor. Unless God gives him specific words, as He does sometimes in visions when the prophet hears heavenly beings speaking, he must find for himself the words that set forth accurately the truths God has revealed to him. In this process he

How the light came to Ellen White

Note the simplicity of the language used by Ellen White in a description of how light came to her in her first vision: "While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, 'Look again, and look a little higher. At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path.'—*Early Writings*, p. 14.

Analyzing this statement, we observe that her coming into vision is described by the words "The Holy Ghost fell upon me." Although she remained bodily in the room where she was praying at the family altar, to her it seemed that—

1. She was rising above the world.
2. She turned to look for something.
3. She could not locate that which she sought.
4. She heard a voice speaking to her.
5. She obeyed the command of that voice.
6. Raising her eyes, she observed the Advent people traveling.
7. She viewed their destination.
8. Later, she seemed to be with them as they enjoyed their reward.

Thus it is clear that to her the experiences in vision were real. She was seeing, feeling, hearing, obeying, and acting in faraway places, though bodily she remained in the room. Those in the room with her did not see what she saw or hear what she heard. It was more than a moving picture: she was a participant in the action. Later she related or wrote out in her own words these experiences.

Oftentimes while in vision Ellen White would be conveyed to a home or an institution, and then she would be conducted from room to room or department to

may draw upon his own vocabulary, find words in a dictionary or thesaurus, borrow expressions from the writings of uninspired writers, or be aided by assistants. "Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

People seldom think of this when they read the Bible or the writings of Ellen G. White. They tend to think that literary works containing inspired messages were created *ex nihilo*, somewhat as was the world during Creation week. (Some people also think of the REVIEW as originating in this way. They forget the work of authors, editors, typesetters, proofreaders, pressmen, computer operators, mailers, and a host of others who were involved in producing and delivering the magazine.)

department. She would seem to be in the councils that were held, would witness the actions of council members, hear the words spoken, and observe the surroundings in general.

As Seventh-day Adventists we are uniquely fortunate in a study of inspiration, for we have had a prophet in our midst.

In 1887, from across the Atlantic, she wrote to one of the workers regarding the detrimental policies pursued in one of the institutions. Note how she received her information: "I arose at three o'clock this morning with a burden on my mind. . . . In my dreams I was at _____, and I was told by my Guide to mark everything I heard and to observe everything I saw. I was in a retired place, where I could not be seen, but could see all that went on in the room. Persons were settling accounts with you, and I heard them remonstrating with you in regard to the large sum charged for board and room and treatment. I heard you with firm, decided voice refuse to lower the charge. I was astonished to see that the charge was so high."—Letter 30, 1887.

At times she was shown buildings not yet erected but which in the future would constitute a part of institutions. She referred to one such instance in a letter written in 1903: "I have been thinking of how, after we began sanitarium work in Battle Creek, sanitarium buildings all ready for occupation were shown to me in vision. The Lord instructed me as to the way in which the work in these buildings should be conducted in order for it to exert a saving influence on the patients.

"All this seemed very real to me, but when I awoke, I found that the work was yet to be done, that there were no buildings erected.

"Another time I was shown a large building going up on the site on which the Battle Creek Sanitarium was afterward erected. The brethren were in great perplexity

We think Elder White's series of articles will be particularly helpful in that it will provide a behind-the-scenes glimpse of how Ellen G. White wrote her books and how they were prepared for publication.

2. *In communicating with the human family, God inspired persons, not writings.* Inspiration acted on the person, not on literary products. The apostle Peter declared: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). "It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired."—*Ibid.* This is an important point, and it must not be misunderstood. Speakers and others often call the Bible "the inspired Word of God"; and rightly so. Mrs. White's statement refers to methodology, not authority. God inspires people, not words. People can think; words cannot. People can be impressed by the Holy Spirit; words cannot.

as to who should take charge of the work. I wept sorely. One of authority stood up among us, and said, 'Not yet. You are not ready to invest means in that building, or to plan for its future management.'

"At this time the foundation of the Sanitarium had been laid. But we needed to learn the lesson of waiting."—Letter 135, 1903.

Symbolic representations given

Two consecutive paragraphs from a personal testimony addressed to a prominent worker of earlier years illustrate how life's experiences were sometimes represented symbolically: "Many other scenes connected with your case have been presented to me. At one time you were represented to me as trying to push a long car up a steep ascent. But this car, instead of going up the hill kept running down. This car represented the food business as a commercial enterprise, which has been carried forward in a way that God does not command.

"At another time you were represented to me as a general, mounted on a horse, and carrying a banner. One came and took out of your hand the banner bearing the words, 'The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,' and it was trampled in the dust. I saw you surrounded by men who were linking you up with the world."—Letter 239, 1903.

At times the events of the past, present, and future were opened up to Ellen White in panoramic view. It seemed to her that she witnessed in rapid succession the vivid enactment of the scenes of history. I quote here a few sentences from her *Introduction to The Great Controversy*, giving us a glimpse of this means of enlightenment of her mind: "As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, *and the scenes of the past and the future*, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future."—Page xi. (Italics supplied.) □

3. *Inspiration involves a variety of methods in communicating truth and God's will.* Some Bible writers were given visions and dreams. Others, who had no visions, were given special understandings and insights into divine mysteries. Others were given special guidance in selecting and recording events and historical incidents. Still others were given special wisdom in understanding and interpreting the meaning of events. On the latter point it is well to note that historical events may be observed and recorded by both inspired people and uninspired people. Numerous writers could have recorded the fact that three men were crucified on a Friday in A.D. 31. But without an inspired person to provide the meaning of the event, the happening would have been seen as little different from numerous other crucifixions. One of the major functions of inspiration is to enable people to see the meaning of events, and to

The prophet bears testimony

The Holy Spirit is operative not only when the prophet receives the divine message but also when he delivers the message in writing.

There are two features in the prophet's experience—the vision itself and the bearing of testimony of what has been revealed in vision. Having been received, the message must be imparted by the prophet through the most accurate language at the prophet's command.

The prophet may have at ready command words that would convey the message satisfactorily, or he may find it necessary to study diligently to find words adequate to convey the message correctly and impressively. At one time he may use certain words and at another time other words in conveying the same message. While writing *The Desire of Ages*, Mrs. White declared: "I tremble for fear lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words."—*Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 59. The transmission of the message might suffer some impairment because of the inadequacy of human language. Note this comment by Ellen G. White:

interpret them in the light of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

4. *The message of an inspired writer does not depend for its authority on whether it is accompanied by the label, "This is God's Word."* In Old Testament times the prophets often began or ended their messages with statements such as "The Lord spake thus," "The word of the Lord came unto me," "The Lord said," or "The Lord hath spoken it" (see, for example, Isa. 1:24; 8:11; Eze. 6:1; Hosea 1:2; Obadiah 18). New Testament writers, while at times mentioning the origin of their messages (e.g., Rev. 1:1, 2), usually did not. They depended on the writings to be self-authenticating as messages from God. In her earlier writings, Mrs. White often used the expression "I was shown," but later, especially when writing for the general public, she did not. This change of practice did not indicate any difference in the authority of the message communicated.

If kept in mind, the four points that we have mentioned will aid in understanding and appreciating the informa-

"The Bible . . . was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all 'given by inspiration of God' (2 Tim. 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One



Ellen White said that she was just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing out her visions as she was in having them.

by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language. . . .

tion set forth by Elder White in this compilation of REVIEW articles. The articles represent the mature thinking and experience of one who has spent 50 years gaining increased familiarity with documents given through inspiration, and studying how Ellen G. White, his inspired grandmother, did her work.

In 1890 Mrs. White wrote: "The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. . . . Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony."—Letter 12, 1890, quoted in *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 48.

Because Satan is today making supreme efforts to undermine confidence in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, we feel convinced that the end of all things is near. Now is the time for us to build faith and know what we believe. This series of articles should strengthen confidence in God, His church, and His inspired messenger.

K. H. W.

"Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. . . .

"As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi.

"Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation."

Note the expression "Each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind." Although the prophet must draw upon his facilities of expression in presenting his message, the Holy Spirit is at work. This is a vital point. Ellen White put it this way: "Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37.

Guidance of the Holy Spirit

In answering certain questions in 1860, she also touched on this point: "Sometimes the things which I have seen are hid from me after I come out of vision, and I cannot call them to mind until I am brought before a company where that vision applies, then the things which I have seen come to my mind with force. I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that He is pleased to have me relate or write them."—*Ibid.*, pp. 36, 37.

The thought is again emphasized: "Through the inspiration of His Spirit the Lord gave His apostles truth, to be expressed according to the development of their minds by the Holy Spirit. But the mind is not cramped, as if forced into a certain mold."—*Ibid.*, p. 22.

The prophet, then, receives his message through the visions while totally under the influence of the Spirit of God. He bears his testimony under the influence of the Spirit of God, but not to the point of being mechanically controlled, or of being forced into a mold. Rather, he communicates the message in the best manner and from the point of view of his background and style, thus appealing particularly to people with backgrounds similar to his.

On certain occasions the very words to be used are impressed upon his mind by the Spirit of God. Note this from Ellen White in a letter of admonition in which after dealing with certain situations she stated: "I am trying to catch the very words and expressions that were made in reference to this matter, and as my pen hesitates a moment, the appropriate words come to my mind."—Quoted in *Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 22.

Another statement reads: "While I am writing out important matter, He [the Holy Spirit] is beside me, helping me . . . , and when I am puzzled for a fit word with which to express my thought, He brings it clearly and distinctly to my mind."—Letter 127, 1902.

Writing history

History was presented to Ellen White as a background on which the great controversy story was traced. In her introduction to *The Great Controversy* she tells how the controversy was presented to her: "Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, and the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law."—Page x.

It appears that her experience was similar to that of Moses on Mount Nebo when the Promised Land was shown him. Ellen White describes Moses' experience vividly in *Patriarchs and Prophets*: "And now a panoramic view of the Land of Promise was presented to him. Every part of the country was spread out before him, not faint and uncertain in the dim distance, but standing out clear, distinct, and beautiful to his delighted vision. In this scene it was presented, not as it then appeared, but as it would become, with God's blessing upon it, in the possession of Israel.

"He seemed to be looking upon a second Eden. There were mountains clothed with cedars of Lebanon, hills gray with olives and fragrant with the odor of the vine, wide green plains bright with flowers and rich in fruitfulness, here the palm trees of the tropics, there waving fields of wheat and barley, sunny valleys musical with

the ripple of brooks and the song of birds, goodly cities and fair gardens, lakes rich in 'the abundance of the seas,' grazing flocks upon the hillsides, and even amid the rocks the wild bee's hoarded treasures. . . .

"Moses saw the chosen people established in Canaan, each of the tribes in its own possession. He had a view of their history after the settlement of the Promised Land: The long, sad story of their apostasy and its punishment was spread out before him. He saw them, because of their sins, dispersed among the heathen, the glory departed from Israel, her beautiful city in ruins, and her people captives in strange lands. He saw them restored to the land of their fathers, and at last brought under the dominion of Rome.

"He was permitted to look down the stream of time and behold the first advent of our Saviour. . . . He followed the Saviour to Gethsemane, and beheld the agony in the garden, the betrayal, the mockery and scourging—the crucifixion. . . . He looked again, and beheld Him coming forth a conqueror, and ascending to heaven escorted by adoring angels and leading a multitude of captives."—Pages 472-476.

The dramatic picture continues, but we need go no further. Enthralled, Moses watched the events take place, seeing, hearing, and participating, and in receiving the message even the sense of smell came into play. In this vivid manner the history of the future was opened up to the prophet. It is very unlikely that dates were revealed to him. It is not likely that all the cities he saw were named. Those were inconsequential details, not of primary importance to the unfolding theme.

Was Ellen White shown in each instance in minute detail all of the names of the places and the dates of the events which she beheld? The evidence is that she was not.

She saw events occur—events significant as a part of the controversy story. Minor details and incidental references not basic to the account were of less importance. Some of this information could be ascertained from the sacred writings, some from common sources of knowledge, such as reliable historians. Apparently in His providence God did not consider it essential to impart these minutiae through vision.

Observations of W. C. White

Ellen White's son, W. C. White, describes her experience as follows: "Mother has never claimed to be authority on history. The things which she has written out are descriptions of flashlight pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men, with views of the past, present, and future history in its relation to this work. In connection with the writing out of these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavoring to present.

"When I was a mere boy, I heard her read D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation* to my father. She

read to him a large part, if not the whole, of the five volumes. She has read other histories of the Reformation. This has helped her to locate and describe many of the events and the movements presented to her in vision. This is somewhat similar to the way in which the study of the Bible helps her to locate and describe the many figurative representations given to her regarding the development of the great controversy in our day between truth and error."—W. C. White in a statement in the General Conference Council, Oct. 30, 1911, quoted in *Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 33.

A few months later W. C. White stated the following: "Regarding Mother's writings and their use as authority on points of history and chronology, Mother has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority regarding the details of history or historical dates. The great truths revealed to Mother regarding the controversy between good and evil, light and darkness, have been given to her in various ways, but chiefly as flashlight views of great events in the lives of individuals and in the experiences of churches, of bands of reformers, and of nations. . . .

"When writing out the experiences of reformers in the time of the Reformation and in the great Advent Movement of 1844, Mother often gave at first a partial description of some scene presented to her. Later on she would write it out more fully, and again still more fully. I have known her to write upon one subject four or five times, and then mourn because she could not command language to describe the matter more perfectly.

Sometimes gave partial descriptions

"When writing out the chapters for *Great Controversy*, she sometimes gave a partial description of an important historical event, and when her copyist who was preparing the manuscripts for the printer, made inquiry regarding the time and place, Mother would say that those things are recorded by conscientious historians. Let the dates used by those historians be inserted.

"When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way. Mother regards with great respect the work of those faithful historians who devoted years of time to the study of God's great plan as presented in the prophecy, and the outworking of that plan as recorded in history."—W. C. White, Letter to W. W. Eastman, Nov. 4, 1912.

With regard to the history of the Reformation the following statement by Ellen White is significant: "Events in the history of the reformers have been presented before me."—Letter 48, 1894.

Related to this is W. C. White's declaration that: "Mother's contact with European people brought to her mind scores of things that had been presented to her during past years, some of them two or three times, and other scenes many times."—Quoted in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 124. □

The question of infallibility

The autograph copies of the Biblical writers have long since disappeared. But Ellen White's autograph manuscripts are extant and throw light on the method of inspiration.

Ellen White declares of the Bible: "The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. . . . 'Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

She does not deny that the wording of the Scriptures may lead some to draw fallible conclusions. But she affirms that the Scriptures themselves provide an infallible revelation. The revelation of God's will is authoritative and infallible, but the language used in imparting it to mankind is human and hence is imperfect.

Declares Ellen White: "God and heaven alone are infallible."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37. And again, in speaking of her work she says, "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible."—*Ibid.* She illuminates this point, saying: "The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought. Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education."—*Ibid.*, p. 22.

The prophet's manuscripts

We do not know, of course, the steps taken by the prophets of old in preparing their manuscripts. Did they

cross out a word or a phrase and replace it with one that expressed the concept more clearly? Was the grammar in the first draft faultless? Did the initial draft furnish copy ready for publication? No copies of the original Bible manuscripts are extant for our examination.

But when it comes to Ellen White, we have in our possession her own original autographs. These give us clues. The fact that the Holy Spirit rested upon her did not at once put her in possession of a knowledge of the correct spelling of each word employed or of impeccable grammar. She was a careful worker and, aided by God's Spirit, she possessed the ability to convey truth clearly and impressively; but with her it required constant effort to do so as accurately and effectively as possible. An examination of her published writings and of her manuscripts reveals a progressive development in vocabulary and skill in the use of words.

The recognition by her contemporaries of the fact that grammatical imperfections could appear in inspired writings in no way lessened their confidence in, or acceptance of, these writings.

Ellen White freely discussed the help she received from literary assistants: "While my husband lived, he acted as a helper and counselor in the sending out of the messages that were given to me. We traveled extensively. Sometimes light would be given to me in the night season, sometimes in the daytime before large congregations. The instruction I received in vision was faithfully written out by me, as I had time and strength for the work. Afterward we examined the matter together, my husband correcting grammatical errors and eliminating needless repetition. Then it was carefully copied for the persons addressed, or for the printer.

"As the work grew, others assisted me in the preparation of matter for publication. After my husband's death, faithful helpers joined me, who labored untiringly in the work of copying the testimonies and preparing articles for publication.

"But the reports that are circulated, that any of my helpers are permitted to add matter or change the meaning of the messages I write out, are not true."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 50.

These helpers were not baffled to find disagreement in tenses in a sentence in a manuscript or an early pamphlet. Her ministry bore the divine credentials. They knew the content of the messages to be God's message to them.

When in 1883 it became necessary to republish the early testimony pamphlets, Mrs. White and her associates recognized that certain imperfections in expression should be corrected so as to present the message in the best literary form.

Because of its importance, the matter was carried to the General Conference session of 1883. At that meeting, important decisions were reached that not only gave guidelines for the reprinting of these "Testimonies" but also placed the denomination on record as to its understanding of certain fundamental principles having to do with the utterances of the Spirit of Prophecy. We quote

from the minutes of the meeting:

"32. WHEREAS, Some of the bound volumes of the 'Testimonies to the Church,' are out of print, so that full sets cannot be obtained at the Office; and

"WHEREAS, There is a constant and urgent call for the reprinting of these volumes; therefore

"RESOLVED, That we recommend their republication in such a form as to make four volumes of seven or eight hundred pages each.

"33. WHEREAS, Many of these testimonies were written under the most unfavorable circumstances, the writer being too heavily pressed with anxiety and labor to devote critical thought to the grammatical perfection of the writings, and they were printed in such haste as to allow these imperfections to pass uncorrected; and

"WHEREAS, We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed; therefore

"RESOLVED, That in the republication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought; and, further

"34. RESOLVED, That this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the republication of these volumes according to the above preambles and resolutions."—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 27, 1883.

An editorial explains

Five years later in an editorial in the *Review and Herald*, Uriah Smith discussed the question: "Which are inspired, Words or ideas?"

"The questioner says, 'Is not a word a sign of an idea? and how then can an idea be inspired, and the signs that transfer the idea from one mind to another be uninspired?'

"Ans.—If there was but one word by which an idea could be expressed, this would be so; but when there are perhaps a hundred ways of expressing the same idea, the case becomes very different. Of course, if the Holy Spirit should give a person words to write, he would be obliged to use those very words, without change; but when simply a scene or view is presented before a person, and no language is given, he would be at liberty to describe it in his own words, as might seem to him best to express the truth in the case.

"And if, having written it out once, a better way of expressing it should occur to him, it would be perfectly legitimate for him to scratch out all he had written and write it over again, keeping strictly to the ideas and facts which had been shown him; and in the second writing there would be the divinely communicated idea just as much as in the first, while in neither case could it be said that the words employed were dictated by the Holy Spirit, but were left to the judgment of the individual himself.

"Much of what the prophets have written in the

Scriptures are words spoken directly by the Lord, and are not their own words. In these cases, of course, the words are inspired. In Sister White's writings she often records words spoken by angels. Such words, of course, she gives as she hears them, and has no discretionary power in regard to the terms to be used, or the construction to be followed. These are not her words, and are not to be changed.

"But much of what the penmen of the Bible have said they might have written in different phraseology, and the truths uttered have been inspired truths to the same extent that they are now."—*Review and Herald*, March 13, 1888.

In a statement approved by Ellen White herself, W. C. White said:

"Mother has never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find that my father, or Elders Bates, Andrews, Smith, or Waggoner put forth this claim. If there was verbal inspiration in writing her manuscripts why should there be on her part the work of addition or adaptation? It is a fact that Mother often takes one of her manuscripts and goes over it thoughtfully, making additions that develop the thought still further."—*The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 189.

"We believe the light given by God to His servants is by enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting thoughts, and not . . . the very words in which the ideas should be expressed."

This position is reaffirmed by words penned by Ellen White while residing in Europe: "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

Thus, because of the presence of a prophet of God in their midst, Seventh-day Adventists have had a firsthand demonstration of how inspiration operates. Those who work with the Biblical documents alone must deal with materials written some two to three and a half millenniums ago, of which only copies reproduced many times exist today. □

The importance of understanding inspiration

Certain crisis situations that loom ahead may be better weathered if sound concepts of inspiration are held.

Faulty concepts concerning inspiration-revelation, be they liberal or extreme, can lead to disaster. There is good reason to believe that the great adversary will take advantage of unsound concepts in this area, for we are told that "the very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 48.

One such effort was made some 60 years ago by a man who had been a successful Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and an esteemed administrator.* As he turned critic and foe of the church, he projected as a basis for his break with the church the allegation that Ellen White and Adventists held that every line she wrote, whether in articles, letters, testimonies or books, she claimed was dictated to her by the Holy Spirit, and hence must be infallible.

Some years later a Bible teacher of my acquaintance who was working in a Seventh-day Adventist college gave up his work and to a large extent lost his confidence in the message. His problem? He could no longer accept Ellen White as the Lord's messenger, and wrote a statement explaining why. His father had served many years in the ministry of the church and held the Spirit of Prophecy writings in high regard. In fact, he held what some might characterize as a somewhat extreme position on inspiration, maintaining a mechanical dictatorial concept. This concept he passed on to his son, who too became a minister, and finally a college Bible teacher. In his work as a teacher, he discovered some problems that he could not solve because of his rigid views of inspiration. As a result, he left the work. Some years later, on the invitation of the White Estate, he spent a few hours with me discussing the points that had perplexed him and tripped him up. As we studied together, he and I could see that the problems that loomed so large in his mind had their foundation in rigid and distorted concepts of inspiration. Before the interview closed, he said sadly,

* See Carrie Johnson, *I Was Carroll's Secretary*.

"What a difference it would have made if I had only understood these things differently, but it is too late." He died a sad man.

This incident illustrates the vital importance of a sound understanding of inspiration. Many higher critics maintain that the Bible is no more inspired than the writings of famous authors. This greatly undermines its authority. Some scholars hold that the prophet merely experiences an "encounter" with God in which no information is imparted, no instruction given; in their writings the prophets simply express their reaction to the encounter experience. I see in these higher critical definitions of inspiration the work of the enemy who is seeking to nullify the message from God to His people.

The Bible suggests the following tests as to the genuineness of a prophet:

1. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).
2. Fidelity to the fundamentals of the Christian faith (1 John 4:2).
3. Fulfillment of predictions (Jer. 28:9; Deut. 18:22).
4. "To the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20).

Limitations of space preclude an elaboration at this point, but these are matters with which readers of the *Review* are conversant.

But above and beyond the major tests to which our attention is called in the Scripture is the primary evidence of the operation of inspiration in Ellen White's work—the manner in which these writings speak to the readers' hearts. This every thoughtful and sincere student of her writings has personally experienced.

But questions will arise, problems will confront us. It has been so through the years, it is so today, and if we credit the words of prophecy, such will increase and intensify as we near the end. For this reason our concepts of inspiration must be sound and well supported by the witness of the prophets. Important clues are seen in God's Word, usually in incidental references found in connection with the messages. Every Seventh-day Adventist should watch for these. How did the light come to the prophet? How did the message come through him to the people?

Then what is Ellen White's testimony in these lines? In the preceding articles we have examined some of these. She has written at considerable length on the inspiration of the Bible and has made many references to inspiration in her work. What she wrote is highly informative. As is true in most cases, what she wrote in these lines came in a natural and practical setting. Much of this came in the 1880's. This was the decade when a major new translation of the Bible was being made—a translation that came to be known as the Revised Version, with the New Testament released in 1881 and the Old in 1885.

In the minds of not a few Seventh-day Adventists, such a new translation posed serious questions. Was it admissible and proper to produce a revision of the Scriptures? From time to time in that decade the *Review and Herald* took note of this, and during that same

decade Ellen White penned four important statements on inspiration:

1886—"Objections to the Bible" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19-21).

1888—Introduction to *The Great Controversy* (*The Great Controversy*, pp. v-xii).

1888—"The Inspiration of the Word of God" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 15-18).

1889—"The Mysteries of the Bible a Proof of Its Inspiration" (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 698-711).

The careful study of these four Ellen G. White statements on the inspiration of the Bible will prove to be most helpful.

To these we would add *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 21-76, the balance of Section I, entitled "The Light on Our Pathway"; and the compiled chapter in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, "The Nature and Influence of the 'Testimonies,'" pp. 654-691.

Every Seventh-day Adventist should be familiar with these basic statements that bear so heavily on our concept of inspiration. I urge all to master them.

The operation of inspiration has been a point of special interest to the trustees appointed by Ellen White to care for her writings. A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference from 1901 to 1922, approached the question from the standpoint of its outworkings, in his book *Abiding Gift of Prophecy*. Another of the trustees, F. M. Wilcox, for 33 years editor of the *Review and Herald*, in 1933 discussed various facets of the question in a series of articles titled "The Testimony of Jesus," and these were reprinted in a book of the same title.

How God got His message through

When I entered the employ of the White Estate in 1929, I worked as secretary to W. C. White in the Elmshaven office in California. As I began working with the Ellen G. White manuscripts and letters and published works, I became deeply interested in how God got His messages through to the people. I soon concluded that as God in Bible times spoke through the prophets "at sundry times and in divers manners," so had He spoken to Ellen White. From that time on, this subject has been of great interest to me.

As my work has had to do in part with answering questions regarding Ellen White and her writings, I have often found that the answers to such questions were bound up with an understanding of the operation of inspiration as revealed in the many rich sources in the White Estate vault that supplement published materials as referred to earlier. I find she gives no endorsement to a mechanical dictatorial inspiration, as some have envisioned—our forefathers termed it verbal inspiration, although theologians now use the term differently. And how many times the problems that were perplexing to our inquirers melted in the light of information as to how inspiration actually functions.

The information I found in my work with the documents in our vault, often in incidental references, I

assembled for the benefit of ministers and others in articles that from time to time have been published. These have been republished in permanent form for wide distribution under the title of *Ellen G. White—Messenger to the Remnant* and may be secured in an inexpensive paper binding at Adventist Book Centers. In this the mechanics of inspiration as seen in Ellen White's experience are delineated largely in the form of practical illustrations.

From time to time I have been called upon to address our Bible teachers, history teachers, and other groups on various aspects of Ellen White's work. One of these dealt with "The Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings," another with the question "Who Told Sister White?" I presented a paper also on "Ellen G. White as a Historian" and still another on "Hermeneutical Principles in the E. G. White Writings." For years these, together with the paper titled "Toward a Factual Concept of Inspiration," were available only in mimeographed form. The nature of the important information they bear, based not on highly refined, theological concepts and definitions, but on the simple exhibits provided by the E. G. White documents themselves, led the Review and Herald Publishing Association to publish these in a paperbound book entitled *The Ellen G. White Writings*. The volume also carries the following enlightening appendix items:

1. "Our Use of the Visions of Sister White," by J. N. Andrews.

2. "The Inspiration of the Evangelists and Other New Testament Writers," by Henry Alford, D.D., an Anglican theologian and commentator who worked in 1863. This offers what the White Estate for many years has considered a most helpful document, for it deals with many situations and principles not often thought of touching inspiration.

3. "The 1911 Edition of *The Great Controversy*," being an explanation by William C. White, Ellen White's son and helper, of the involvements in the revision of an inspired book.

The 192-page paperback is available at your Adventist Book Center.

It is painful to see earnest Seventh-day Adventists thrown into perplexity or have their confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy weakened because of faulty concepts. Not having given special study to the matter, they hold rigid views of inspiration that call for the prophet to serve as an automaton, speaking or penning only those words dictated to him by the Holy Spirit. It is equally painful to see many fail to perceive, because of unwarranted liberal views, the hand of God as He communicates to His people through His prophet, and lose the great blessing of the certainty that Seventh-day Adventists are a people led and taught of God.

It is my opinion that the presentation of these articles and the careful reading of the sources of information referred to may prove most helpful as we enter the peril-fraught days ahead. □

Ellen G. White's sources for the Conflict Series books

There has been an increasing interest in Ellen White's "sources" for the Conflict of the Ages books in general, and *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages* in particular.

Probably at no time since Ellen White's death in 1915 has there been among Seventh-day Adventists as intense and widespread an interest in the question of inspiration in general and the inspiration of Ellen White in particular as there is today. Because the Spirit of Prophecy writings strongly affect every believer, interest in these topics is understandable.

Seventh-day Adventists who accept the Spirit of Prophecy counsels as coming from the Lord, and, consequently, as binding, are entitled to assurances that these messages are trustworthy. Readers of the widely distributed books of the Conflict of the Ages Series, bearing Ellen G. White's name, should be able to rest in confidence that her assertions that she was not "the originator of these books" and that they contain "the instruction that during her lifework God has been giving her" can be substantiated (Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903; *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125).

How the light came to Ellen White through her long life of special ministry and how this light was translated into human language is the subject of legitimate and profitable study. Attention to the way in which she, an inspired person, related to the times in which she lived, to the events taking place around her, and to the lines of information that came to her in her reading and in her contacts with others—and to the pressures of those who sought to influence her—is important in forming a basis for a proper understanding of her work.

In recent months there has been an increasing interest in what have been termed Ellen White's "sources" for the Conflict of the Ages books in general, and *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages* in particular.

There is no need for conjecture as to what these sources were, for the extensive records preserved in the White Estate provide in the words of Ellen White herself, and in the statements of those who worked with her, full and satisfying information.

On the basis of my long connection with these sources,

I have been asked to discuss the matter with the readers of the REVIEW. What I here present is based on 50 years with the White Estate and on a more recent intensified study of the records relating to the matter in question. The articles will lead us some distance from the narrow concepts held by some of a mechanical, verbal inspiration according to which Ellen White wrote only what was revealed to her in vision or dictated to her by the Holy Spirit. They also will, I believe, provide fresh and broader insights into the intriguing subject of how inspiration works.

First of all, Ellen White herself deals with the matter of her sources for the Conflict story in the 1888 introduction to *The Great Controversy*. Appearing as it does in the first of the large Conflict books prepared for reading by the general public, it may well be considered a preface to all five of the books—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*—as well as of the earlier works dealing with the Conflict story. It also is one of the most informative statements on inspiration to be found anywhere.

The writing of the Conflict story varied somewhat in nature from the writing of personal testimonies, or of the articles for the published *Testimonies* and other books and articles of counsel and instruction for the church. In the Conflict Series she was largely paralleling Biblical history with secular history. Then, when Biblical history ended, she carried the story to the Second Coming and beyond.

Writing on the Conflict theme was a work that engaged much of Mrs. White's attention throughout her long years of ministry.

To give a perspective to the discussion of the sources of the information in Ellen G. White's portrayal published progressively in three stages, we should examine her objectives. These books were written not to present a world history, nor as a history to correct other historical accounts.

Rather, as stated in her introduction, they were to "trace the history of the controversy in past ages," and to present it in a manner "to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future" (*The Great Controversy*, p. xi). "It is not so much . . . to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events."—*Ibid.*, p. xii. The "records of the past" were to be seen as having "a new significance," for through them "a light is cast upon the future" (*ibid.*). The writer, with eyes on the climactic struggle between the forces of Christ and Satan, was more interested in the large, overall historical picture than in minor details. She portrayed in a marked way God's intervention in human affairs.

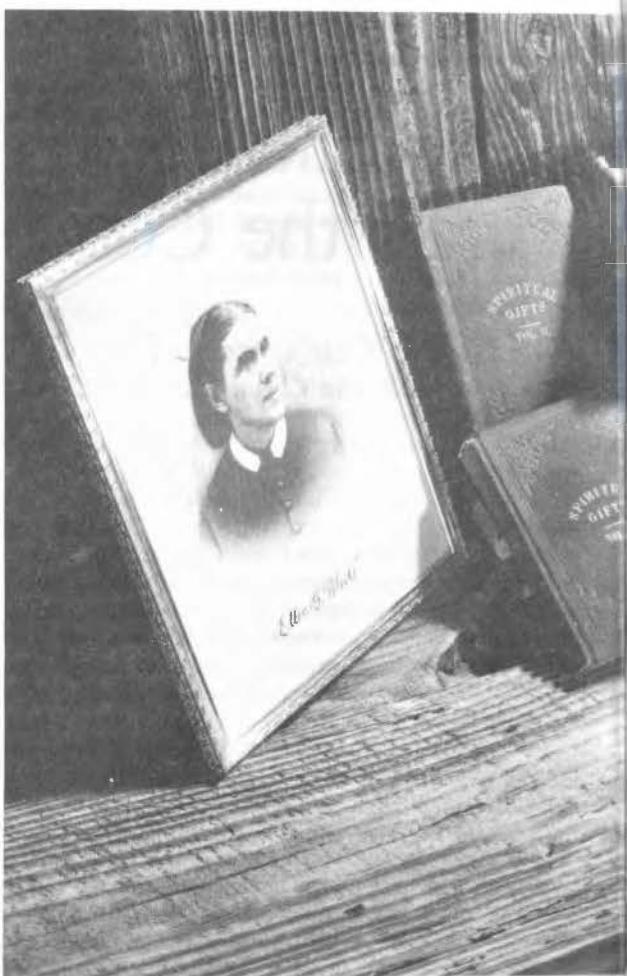
The influence of the Holy Spirit

As noted, Ellen White was instructed "to trace the history of the controversy" (*ibid.*, p. xi). But where would a woman, somewhat infirm and with only three years of formal education, a busy mother and housewife, traveling extensively in the interests of the church, filling many speaking appointments, involved in interviews and in writing testimonies and articles, gain the knowledge of the history she was charged to present to the people? She answers in her introduction that it was (1) through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and (2) with the help of historical records. In this article we note especially the influence of the Holy Spirit on her writing:

"Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil had been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law."—*Ibid.*, p. x.

It is difficult to draw precise lines in the experience of a person who is fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit. No formula can be specific, no precise definition can be spelled out.

The term "illumination of the Holy Spirit" would refer to impressions made upon her heart by "the Spirit of God" (see *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 691), as well as to light coming to her through the visions of the day and the visions of the night, often spoken of as dreams—prophetic dreams. At times, while she was speaking to a congregation, the Spirit of the Lord would reveal to her the life and character of various persons (see *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 678). "Most precious things of the gospel," she declared, were often presented to her, "for



I have new representations every time I open my lips to speak to the people."—Manuscript 174, 1903. She reported also that while praying or writing in the quiet of her workroom, and fully conscious of her surroundings, important scenes passed before her mind (see Manuscript 12c, 1896).

It is difficult to draw precise lines in the experience of a person who is fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit. No formula can be specific, no precise definition can be spelled out.

In 1860 Ellen White wrote of the visions: "At times I am carried far ahead into the future and shown what is to take place. Then again I am shown things as they have occurred in the past."—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 292.

She further indicated her total dependence on the Spirit of God in presenting the vision: "I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that He is pleased to have me relate or write them."—*Ibid.*, p. 293.



These visions were an important method in the revelatory process. Whether in vision she saw a city being destroyed as the angel of God stood by her side explaining the significance of the scene (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 92, 93), or was taken from room to room in an institution and observed what was taking place (*Counsels on Health*, pp. 412, 413), or was shown buildings not yet erected and given instruction as to how the work should be done when the buildings were ready (Letter 135, 1903, in *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 11), or in symbolic views was shown the experience of a leading worker (Letter 239, 1903, in *Messenger*, p. 11), or witnessed the scenes presented to her of the great controversy (*The Great Controversy*, pp. xi, xii), all were a part of the process by which God imparted light to His chosen servant.

When Ellen White said, "From time to time I have been permitted to behold* the working, in different ages, of the great controversy," she implied scenic visions. The phrase "in different ages" suggests not only many visions but widely varied historical events in the saga of,

and throughout the long period of, the great controversy.

In her autobiography written in 1860, Ellen White mentioned two early comprehensive visions opening up the great controversy story, but she built her account primarily on the scenic vision given to her on March 14, 1858. Of this two-hour vision she wrote: "In this vision at Lovett's Grove [(Ohio)], most of the matter of the Great Controversy which I had seen ten years before, was repeated, and I was shown that I must write it out."—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 270.

This she did in the spring and summer of 1858, giving the church her first bound book in September, the little 219-page *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, titled *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels*.

How the information came to her

While, as already noted, God employed different methods of imparting light and information to her throughout her life, the evidence is that visual scenic representations was the method most frequently employed in opening the controversy story to her. The reader is urged to turn to *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1,† and spend a few hours reading the book through. It opens with three short chapters introducing the controversy theme, tracing briefly the "Fall of Satan," "The Fall of Man," and "The Plan of Salvation." Then, omitting Old Testament history, it picks up the story with the birth and ministry of Christ and carries through to the destruction of sin and sinners and to the new earth. Old Testament history is left for *Spiritual Gifts*, volumes 3 and 4. I reproduce here a few sentences from the first volume, which make clear a primary source of the information the author presents and how the information came to her.

Page 20—"I saw that the holy angels often visited the garden, and gave instruction to Adam and Eve."

The evidence is that visual scenic representations were the method most frequently employed in opening the controversy story to her.

Page 21—"I saw a sadness came over Adam's countenance."

Page 46—"I then viewed Jesus in the garden with His disciples."

Page 68—"I saw the Roman guard . . . raise themselves to see if it were safe for them to look around."

Page 79—"Next I was shown the disciples as they sorrowfully gazed towards heaven to catch the last glimpse of their ascending Lord."

Page 114—"I was pointed to Adam and Eve in Eden.

* All italics used in quotations are supplied, unless otherwise noted.

† Available in facsimile reprint from Adventist Book Centers.

... I heard an angel ask, "Who of the family of Adam have passed that flaming sword, and have partaken of the tree of life?" I heard another angel answer, Not one of the family of Adam have passed that flaming sword, and partaken of the tree."

Pages 152, 153—"I saw the disappointment of the trusting ones. . . . Then I saw the disappointed ones again look cheerful, and raise their eyes to heaven, looking with faith and hope for their Lord's appearing. . . . I could see the trace of deep sorrow upon their countenances."

"The Lord has made me His humble instrument in shedding some rays of precious light upon the past."

Reinforcing the concept of scenic visions are expressions indicating that as she viewed developments she was "carried" forward or back to view particular events: "I was carried down to the time when Jesus was to take upon Himself man's nature, humble Himself as a man, and suffer the temptations of Satan."—*Ibid.*, p. 28.

After writing of the Transfiguration, she declared: "I was then carried down to the time when Jesus ate the passover supper with His disciples."—*Ibid.*, p. 44.

After writing of the work of the apostles, she stated: "I was carried forward to the time when the heathen idolators cruelly persecuted the Christians, and killed them. Blood flowed in torrents."—*Ibid.*, p. 103.

"I was carried back to the days of the disciples, and was shown the beloved John, that God had a special work for him to accomplish."—*Ibid.*, p. 130.

Ellen White employed a similar expression in writing on "The Reformation," in which Luther and Melanchthon are particularly mentioned: "I was shown the wisdom of God in choosing these two men, of different characters to carry on the work of reformation. I was then carried back to the days of the apostles, and saw that God chose as companions an ardent and zealous Peter, and a mild, patient, meek John."—*Ibid.*, pp. 122, 123.

While in the immediate context she does not specifically declare that in a visual representation in 1858 she saw Luther and Melanchthon, the expression "I was then carried back to the days of the apostles" seems to imply that from a point of viewing certain Reformation scenes, she was removed by the space of 1,500 years to view other scenes. At another time she plainly declared: "Events in the history of the reformers have been presented before me."—Letter 48, 1894, published in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 123.

After preparing an autobiographical work, *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, published in 1860, she turned to the writing of Old Testament history, reviewing the experiences of men of old that illustrated the struggle between the forces of good and evil. In her preface to *Spiritual*

Gifts, volume 3, she stated: "In presenting this, my third little volume, to the public, I am comforted with the conviction that the Lord has made me His humble instrument in shedding some rays of precious light upon the past."—Page v.

She mentioned that "the great facts of faith, connected with the history of holy men of old," had been opened to her in vision (*ibid.*).

She then narrated in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3 and the first half of 4, published in 1864, the high points of the controversy story from Creation to the time of Solomon and closed with a sketchy bridge to the captivity of Israel and the Messiah. Volume 3 carried the subtitle "Important Facts of Faith in Connection With the History of Holy Men of Old." Fewer statements of "I saw" and "I was shown" appear in volumes 3 and 4. Yet on some key or vital points they were used.

Scenes witnessed in vision

Frequent descriptions of events on almost every page leave the reader with the inescapable conviction that she witnessed these scenes in vision. This is especially so in regard to the temptation and Fall of man and the Flood, its causes and aftermath.

As she dealt with the days of Creation, the Fall of man, the age of the earth, and the relation of geology to the Bible, she made direct reference to the vision source, declaring "I saw" (p. 42), "I was shown" (p. 92), and "I have been shown" (p. 93).

Five years earlier, Charles Darwin had published *The Origin of Species*, countering flat creation and advocating the evolutionary process. His theories were fast gaining ground and making notable inroads in the Christian world. The *Spiritual Gifts* "Facts of Faith" chapter "Disguised Infidelity" (pp. 90-96) seems to be a direct response to the theory of theistic evolution.

To summarize: It seems evident that Ellen White's main source of the thrilling portrayal of the great con-

As she dealt with the days of Creation, the Fall of man, the age of the earth, and the relation of geology to the Bible, she made direct reference to the vision source, declaring "I saw," "I was shown."

troversy story in her first little bound books in 1858 and 1864 was visions. Beyond these, of course, were other ways in which God illuminated her mind under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And we should remember that although such terms as "I saw," "I was shown," et cetera, were not later used, this does not necessarily mean that what she portrayed was not seen in vision. □

Rewriting and amplifying the controversy story

It is informative to observe the manner in which Ellen White's earlier books on the great controversy were rewritten and enlarged.

In her portrayal of the great controversy story, Ellen White used three principal sources: (1) The Bible, an inspired source, in which she had unquestioned confidence, (2) God-given visions, which, while not touching in detail every phase of the story, served as an overall basic source, and (3) various historical works, which, in addition to broadening her vocabulary and aiding her in expressing truth, provided dates of events, geographic descriptions, and some details and sequences of church history. It is not unlikely that these works suggested such things as a narrative link, a logical assumption, or an appropriate conclusion. But, of the three sources, the oft-repeated visions of the controversy provided the basic materials.

In 1888, 30 years after her second great-controversy vision, she wrote, "From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy."—*The Great Controversy*, p. x.

In 1911 she declared, "While writing the manuscript of *Great Controversy* I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many times the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind."—Letter 56, 1911, quoted in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 117.

In 1889, while working on the manuscript for *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she touched on certain other matters: "I had been, during the forty-five years of experience, shown the lives, the character and history of the patriarchs, and prophets. . . . I could but have a vivid picture in my mind from day to day of the way *reformers were treated*, how slight difference of opinion seemed to create a frenzy of feeling. Thus it was in the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus—all this had passed before me *point by point*."—Letter 14, 1889.*

Her terminology here is of interest. She says she saw the way reformers were treated, and in scenic visions sacred history passed before her "point by point." While preparing the manuscript for *The Desire of Ages* in the early 1890's, she confessed: "I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me."—Letter 40, 1892, quoted in *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 59.

Three years later, while still at work on *The Desire of Ages*, she referred to the clarity in which the scenes stood before her: "My mind has been deeply stirred over many things. It seems to me that *light from heaven flashes upon me*, and the Holy Spirit brings many things to my remembrance. Important views are clear to my mind's eye, as though I was looking upon the scene as I wrote."—Letter 27, 1895. (Italics in original.)

As to events yet future, she at one time described how the second coming of Christ was opened up to her: "Scenes of such thrilling, solemn interest passed before me as no language is adequate to describe. It was all a living reality to me."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 76.

In 1889, writing in a more general way of how, at times, light was imparted in vision and also how matters forgotten were called to her mind, she declared: "The question is asked, How does Sister White know in regard to the matters of which she speaks so decidedly, as if she had authority to say these things? I speak thus because they flash upon my mind when in perplexity like lightning out of a dark cloud in the fury of a storm. Some scenes presented before me years ago have not been retained in my memory, but when the instruction then given is needed, sometimes even when I am standing before the people, the remembrance comes sharp and

* All italics used in quotations are supplied unless otherwise noted.

clear, like a flash of lightning, bringing to mind distinctly that particular instruction. At such times I cannot refrain from saying the things that flash into my mind, not because I have had a new vision, but because that which was presented to me perhaps years in the past, has been recalled to my mind forcibly."—Manuscript 33, 1911 (March 18, 1889).

In an interview in 1907 she told of how the light often came to her: "Now I have light, mostly in the night season, just as if the whole thing was transacting, and I viewing it, and . . . I am listening to the conversation."—Manuscript 105, 1907.

And it was not alone in the visions of the night that scenic views passed before her. A few months earlier she had written, "When I am using my pen, wonderful representations are given me of *past, present, and future.*"—Letter 86, 1906.

The testimony of W. C. White

William C. White, son of James and Ellen White, gives us additional interesting insights. After the death of his father, he assisted his mother for 35 years in her travels and in the preparation and publication of her writings. Discussing the book *The Great Controversy* and the manner in which light came to her concerning historical events, he declared in a statement fully approved by Ellen White as correctly representing the matter: "The things which she has written out, are descriptions of flashlight pictures[†] and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men, with views of past, present, and future history in its relation to this work."—*The Great Controversy*, 1911 ed., p. 4, White Estate Document File #85, quoted in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 33.

Another statement from the pen of W. C. White throws light on scenic visions depicting historical events: "The things revealed to Sister White were not given to her like the repeating of a story that she must repeat. In vision she seemed to be looking down through a great opening in the sky and she saw multitudes of people in action, and the angels of God ministering to them. She was not given the language. Many times she remembered what the angel said, but many times she had to describe what she had seen the very best she could. As the work advanced, and she prepared it over and over again, her description was more complete."—W. C. White, in White Estate Document File 107g.

Nor were the revelations to Ellen White uniform in coverage. Concerning this, W. C. White wrote: "The framework of the great temple of truth sustained by her writings was presented to her clearly in vision. In some features of this work, information was given in detail. Regarding some features of the revelation, such as the features of prophetic chronology, as regards the minis-

tration in the sanctuary and the changes that took place in 1844, the matter was presented to her many times and in detail many times, and this enabled her to speak very clearly and very positively regarding the foundation pillars of our faith.

"In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in [The] *Acts of the Apostles*, and in [The] *Great Controversy*, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write up these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates, and geographical relations and to perfect her description."—Letter to L. E. Froom, December 13, 1934, quoted in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, 1884 ed. facsimile, Supplement, p. 539.

The point made above by W. C. White concerning differences in details and concerning frequency of presentation becomes clear when one compares what Ellen White wrote based on the 1858 vision with her later writings. While the early writings touched points of vital importance, they omitted many others of lesser consequence. She recounted in 12 pages what she was shown of the Fall of Satan, the Fall of man, and the plan of salvation. Then she was "carried down to the time when Jesus was to take upon Himself man's nature" (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 28). After describing His birth, baptism, temptation, conflicts in His ministry, and the Transfiguration, in 28 pages, she declared that she was "carried down" to the Passover. The events vital to the controversy story, the Passover, Christ's betrayal, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, apparently were revealed in a certain degree of detail, for 37 pages were devoted to the description. Subsequent visions filled in the overall narrative.

In reconstructing certain less important features of Old Testament history, she traced the narrative very briefly and employed extensive Scripture quotations to fill out the account. (See *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 252, 253;



William C. White assisted his mother, Ellen White, for 35 years after the death of his father. He traveled with her and helped her prepare her writings for publication.

[†] "Flashlight pictures" and similar expressions are borrowed from photographic terminology. Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Unabridged) says, in part, concerning "flashlight": "a sudden bright artificial light used in taking photographic pictures . . . a photograph taken by such a light."

261-266; also vol. 4, pp. 16-18, 20, 21.) This procedure was at times followed in some of her later books.

The Old Testament portion of the controversy story presented in the 372 small pages of *Spiritual Gifts*, volumes 3 and 4, in 1864, mentioned last week, became the basis for *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1, six years later. It was a 414-page book, and was eventually expanded into *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1890.

The materials on the life of Christ and the history of the early church were in time greatly amplified from 87 small pages in the 1858 book to 810 pages of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes 2 and 3, published in 1877 and 1878. The post-Biblical history filling 117 pages in the 1858 book grew to 486 pages in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, in 1884. When the little 1858 book was published there were fewer than 2,000 Sabbathkeeping Adventists. As the church grew and the stocks of earlier printed books were exhausted, there was a demand for more. Not only could larger books be handled but Ellen White was eager to give much fuller presentations. So eventually the 572 pages of the first printings of the full span of the controversy story published in the three little books appearing in 1858 and 1864 grew to 1,710 pages in the four *Spirit of Prophecy* volumes of 1870 to 1884. This constituted the second presentation of the controversy story.

Books for door-to-door sales

During this period the church's colporteur ministry began, and it was seen that books presenting this story could well form a part of Seventh-day Adventist literature to be distributed widely by door-to-door selling. Ellen White felt that considerable enlargement and some adaptation of wording to make them more appropriate for the general public was called for. Also, in further amplified form, the church would be well served. So the books grew in size and number to our present Conflict of the Ages Series. *The Great Controversy* in 1888, with its 678 pages; *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1890, with 755 pages of text; the 835-page *The Desire of Ages* in 1898; *The Acts of the Apostles* in 1911, carrying 602 pages; and finally *Prophets and Kings* at the close of Ellen White's life, with 733 pages. In addition to these, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* and *Christ's Object Lessons* were published.

In the rewritings and amplifications no direct reference was made to the fact that the material was based upon visions. With non-Adventist readers in mind, Ellen White purposely refrained from using phrases such as "I saw" and "I was shown," considering it best not to draw the attention of readers away from the truths presented. So, while the little 1858 book was replete with reminders of the vision source, only a few such expressions were included in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes 1 to 4 (1870-1884), and none in the five Conflict books that followed.

The book *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* was published in the spring of 1888 and revised in

1911‡ under the direction of Ellen White, with slight changes in wording in some places. This book traces the post-Biblical history of the conflict from the destruction of Jerusalem to the new earth and embodies as an important part the great apostasy of the early Christian church, followed by the Reformation of the sixteenth century. As noted last week, in the 1858 book, one five-page chapter is devoted to the Reformation. In the 1884 book there were 128 pages on the subject, and in the enlarged 1888 book the same ground is covered in 228 considerably larger pages, more than doubling the previous text.

Interest in Reformation history

Whatever may have been shown to Ellen White in 1858 of the Reformation of the sixteenth century as a part of the great-controversy theme created an immediate interest in the hearts of both James and Ellen White in Reformation history. In his 1911 statement regarding the writing of *The Great Controversy*, W. C. White informs us, "When I was a mere boy, I heard her read D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation* to my father. . . . She has read other histories of the Reformation." Then he explains: "This has helped her to locate and describe many of the events and the movements presented to her in vision. This is somewhat similar to the way in which the study of the Bible helps her to locate and describe the many figurative representations given to her regarding the development of the great controversy in our day between truth and error."—White Estate Document File #85, quoted in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 33.

When in the early 1880's she undertook the first amplification of her writing on the post-Biblical part of the controversy story, she dealt at length with the Reformation and in particular with the experience of Martin Luther as the primary exhibit of the issues of the conflict in the sixteenth century. Experiences of the Reformers, both before and after Luther, completed that segment of history. But the account of the work of Luther and Melanchthon filled 76 of the 128 pages on the Reformation. Even this was basically a condensation of 18 of her articles that had appeared in the *Signs of the Times* a year earlier, in 1883.

It was not uncommon, when Ellen White had a book in mind, for her to write at length on a given phase of the topic in a series of articles that were published at once in one of the journals of the church. Later they would be condensed for book publication, giving attention to a proper proportion of space that could be devoted to the particular topic as it would appear in the finished volume. This procedure showed up particularly in the preparation of *Prophets and Kings*, in which extended series of articles on Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, et cetera, were published in the church's journals years in advance of the book. □

‡ See *The Ellen G. White Writings*, pp. 79-106, "Ellen G. White as a Historian," and Appendix C, "The 1911 Edition of *The Great Controversy*," and "Supplement to Reprint" of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 507-549.

Historical sources and the Conflict Series

Preserved portions of Ellen White's original drafts of *The Great Controversy* demonstrate her use of historical works in the Conflict Series.

Some may feel that in her work of tracing the "history of the controversy in past ages" Ellen White should have ignored all historical records and put down only what she could reconstruct from what she had seen in vision. Such a viewpoint implies a mechanical, dictatorial concept of inspiration, according to which the very words Ellen White should use would have been imparted to her. However, neither she nor her associates held such a view, nor does the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At its 1883 General Conference session, the denomination recorded the following declaration: "'We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed.'"—*REVIEW AND HERALD*, Nov. 27, 1883, quoted in *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 65.

There is strong evidence, internal, as well as external, that the scenes of the controversy story, as they had passed before Ellen White in vision, provided the basic framework of the narrative, and probably many of the details, as well. However, evidence is lacking that all the details, or even all phases of the history, were thus revealed to her, especially in matters of lesser importance or of purely secular significance. Thus, as she traced a connected history, she made use of the "records" of the past.

And, since, as she stated, "I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision" (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 293), it seems logical to assume that the filling in of some of the narrative details from accepted sources was in full harmony with the biddings of the Holy Spirit to trace the history of the great controversy.

Indeed, in her introduction to *The Great Controversy*, she pointed out that: "The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; *they are facts** which none can gainsay."—*The Great Controversy*, p. xi. Then she

explains: "*This history I have presented briefly*, in accordance with the scope of the book, and the brevity which must necessarily be observed, *the facts having been condensed* into as little space as seemed consistent with a proper understanding of their application."—*Ibid.*, pp. xi, xii.

She went a step further in her explanations by noting: "'Where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted . . . because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject.'"—*Ibid.*, p. xii.

W. C. White recalls that, as Ellen White was writing on the history of the Reformation, she came home one day from the Review and Herald library, where she often worked, and told her husband of being especially impressed by the Spirit of God to look into a certain volume, where her eyes readily fell on a passage that was particularly helpful to her (W. C. White to L. E. Froom, Dec. 13, 1934).

In the main, the working papers involved in the preparation of the Ellen G. White Conflict of the Ages books have not been preserved. Through the years, Mrs. White traveled widely and from time to time moved her place of residence from one point to another in the United States and to Europe and Australia, and then back to America. It was apparently assumed that after the manuscript for a volume had received her final approval and the printed book had been accepted by her, there was no purpose in keeping the masses of papers that could render no further service.

However, we do have a small portion of her original handwritten draft on the experience of Martin Luther, and this enables us to trace the steps in preparation of one of the chapters of *The Great Controversy*.

It is a manuscript of 51 pages, written on a tablet of paper approximately 5½ by 8½ inches. One side of each

* All italics used in quotations are supplied unless otherwise noted.



Working in her writing room to the right on the second floor of her Healdsburg, California, home, Ellen G. White completed her work on *The Great Controversy* in 1888 and *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1889.

sheet is filled with handwriting, and the other side bears a portion of a hat catalogue printed by the Pacific Press.

This handwritten manuscript begins just as Luther is leaving the Diet of Worms and proceeds with an account of his kidnapping and seclusion at the castle of Wartburg. The latter part of the manuscript is devoted to an extended discussion of his efforts to save the Reformation from the excesses of various enthusiasts, with comparisons made to the experiences through which early Adventists passed in their encounters with fanatics.

The early pages of this manuscript were published in the *Signs of the Times*, October 11, 1883, in an article titled "Luther in the Wartburg." The relationship between the handwritten draft and this article is very close. In somewhat condensed form the material appeared in the 1884 *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, as a part of the chapter "Luther Before the Diet," and was carried through to the chapter by the same title in the 1888 enlargement.

It is obvious that as Mrs. White undertook to pen the chapters on Luther's experiences, she consulted books at hand and chose to follow the outline of the historian, sometimes employing his words to describe historical events. At the same time she interspersed these quotations and paraphrases with insights on the significance of certain events, and with spiritual lessons. In recounting the historical narrative, it appears that she often followed rather closely the Reformation history of D'Aubigne, the author she and her husband had read a decade or two before. She was pleased when she found a condensation

of this work in Charles Adams' book *Words That Shook the World*, published in New York in 1858. Of this she secured a copy for her personal library. It is a volume of 333 pages said to be "pictures of the great reformer sketched mainly from his own sayings," presented in "a style and brevity suited to youthful readers." Adams states that his principal source was D'Aubigne.

Mrs. White's handwritten manuscript shows that she made use of the works of the historian, and this material, plus her unique materials represented in special insights and spiritual lessons, are, by and large, carried through into the chapter as published in her 1884 and 1888 books.

Another significant handwritten manuscript that is related to *The Great Controversy* is one of 75 pages written by Ellen White while she was in Europe.

Soon after arriving there in the fall of 1885, she was requested to prepare for distribution in Europe *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, presenting the postbiblical controversy history. This request led her to see the need for presenting a fuller treatment of the more prominent European Reformers than had been represented in the 1884 book. As she was able, with the help of her literary assistants, she undertook this amplification. Residing in Basel, Switzerland, she drew on the histories available to her in Elder J. N. Andrews' library.

One area that called for expansion was the treatment of Huss and Jerome. In preparing a book that would be read by Europeans, the five paragraphs, filling three pages, seemed much too brief. This led her to prepare manuscripts to expand the account. She condensed materials from Wylie and others and interspersed with spiritual lessons and comments the portions she used. In so doing she produced a manuscript of such length that at one point it was thought it might make two chapters on Huss.

The Huss manuscript

The handwritten Huss manuscript in general is similar to the Luther manuscript written four or five years earlier, except that it gives evidence of having been prepared in great haste to meet the pressing demand for expanding the book—a work sandwiched in between her travels and ministry in Europe. Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and penmanship come far short of measuring up to the standard of which she was capable, which she often demonstrated. The manuscript was copious, for, as noted earlier, it was not unusual for Ellen White, in an initial draft, to write much more than was needed in the final plan for a book or chapter. In the end it was felt that only one chapter could be devoted to Huss and Jerome if the proper balance of the book was to be maintained. So the presentation was substantially reduced.

Pressed hard with commitments for travel, Ellen White entrusted this task to Marian Davis, her dedicated and talented literary assistant who was still working in Basel. Such a procedure was not unusual in her book preparation. After the editorial work prepared in this manner was completed, it was carefully examined by Ellen White to determine that it properly represented her

intent. If changes were called for, she penned them in. Unfortunately, for space reasons, most of the spiritual lessons that she had set forth in the Huss manuscript could not be included. This left the bare historical record as a part of the overall great-controversy narrative.

In addition to her explanation in her introduction to *The Great Controversy* as to why she copied from historians, we have the explanation of her son W. C. White who, in 1904, at a time when she was actively engaged in producing her books, wrote: "Mother writes very rapidly. She writes early in the morning, endeavoring to place upon paper a word-picture of the things that are flashed into her mind as a panoramic view of the movements of nations, of communities, of churches, and of individuals. . . .

'In the writing of her books, she has sometimes found it very difficult and laborious to put into language the scenes presented to her; and when she has found in the language of another a correct representation of the thought presented to her, she has sometimes copied sentences and paragraphs—feeling that she had a perfect right to do this; that it was her privilege to utilize the correct statements of other writers, of the scenes that have been presented to her.'—W. C. White Letter to J. J. Gorrell, May 13, 1904.

The records of the White Estate indicate that this procedure was followed to some extent in the production of all the Conflict of the Ages books, but particularly *The Great Controversy*.

Sketches From the Life of Paul

In 1883 Ellen White was urged to provide a little volume on the life of Paul as a Sabbath school lesson help for the 1883 and 1884 lessons. In preparing this book—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*—she had before her the well-known volume *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, produced by two British clergymen, W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson. This book helped her especially in giving geographical and historical descriptions, and she drew from it some words and phrases but no complete sentences. Some of the same spiritual lessons are emphasized in the E. G. White book as are found in the British book.

The Conybeare and Howson book was well known and widely circulated among Seventh-day Adventists, and Mrs. White, in connection with an advertisement for it in the *Signs of the Times*, highly recommended its reading.

It is also clear that at the time she wrote *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, she had before her F. W. Farrar's *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, for she drew some phraseology from this work—a work which itself drew from Conybeare and Howson without giving credit. This was not an uncommon practice among Bible commentators.

Do the rules we might wish to impose as appropriate

governing the work of an inspired person preclude his or her making use of some words or expressions from another as he or she frames a literary structure effectively to portray a geographical description, an account of events, or to project important truth as brought to his mind by the Holy Spirit? If so, not a few of the writers of the Bible fall short of the rules we might impose. And in the case of Ellen White, is there some particular virtue in insisting that all words and terms she employed be strictly original with her?

Highly esteemed commentators of her time, and since, hold that truth is common property, and there was no violation of principle in borrowing one from another. Of this, Ingram Cobbin, in the preface to his "Condensed Commentary" declared: "All the commentators have drawn largely from the fathers, especially from St. Augustine; and most of them have made general property of Patrick, Lowth, and Whitby. Poole has exhausted the old continental writers; Henry has made very free with

[†] Available at your Advertising Book Center in facsimile reprint.

[†] Available at your Adventist Book Center in facsimile reprint.

‡ Occasionally it has been asked whether such literary borrowings by Ellen White should not be considered plagiarism. The accepted practice of historians, and particularly religious writers of the nineteenth century, indicates that procedures she followed were common. See *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* on "Mrs. White's Literary Borrowings" (on, 403-467) for a document-supported discussion.

Bishop Hall and others; Scott and Benson have enriched their pages abundantly from Henry; Gill has translated the spirit of Poole's 'Synopsis,' but he most generally gives his authorities; Adam Clarke and Davidson have been much indebted to all the best critics, though the former does not always mention his obligations, and the latter never."—*The Condensed Commentary and Family Exposition of the Holy Bible* (London: William Tegg, 1863), Preface, p. iv.

Building material in the prophet's hands

Someone might ask whether Mrs. White's use of the writings of others imparts an aura of inspiration to those writings thus used. The answer is that it does not. Truth is truth, and in such use made by an inspired writer they are but building materials in the prophet's hands.

The next question that might be asked is: Would it have been possible for some inaccuracy to have crept into Ellen White's descriptions of historical events or that the

historians from whom she quoted may have been mistaken in some points of detail and thus, Ellen White, not being especially informed, allowed these mistakes to slip through into her narrative? Unless we are to claim more for her than we do for the Bible writers, the answer would have to be in the affirmative, yet this does not invalidate the inspiration of the prophetic writings. In times of old the sacred writers, working under the general superintendence of the Holy Spirit, may have included in their manuscripts as they wrote them what may (by modern definition) have been discrepancies. But I would emphasize that, while a few such discrepancies may exist, they in no wise invalidate the inspiration of God's Word or its overall accuracy and dependability. §

Similarly, in the case of Ellen White we can point to some seeming discrepancies in matters of little conse-

§ The British theologian Dr. Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, in his book *The New Testament for English Readers* (1865), discusses in a most helpful way "The Inspiration of the Evangelists and Other New Testament Writers." See Appendix B in *The Ellen G. White Writings*.

interest and that of the reformation. The elector saw what the future foreshadowed. A still darker tempest was gathering over the reformation and that nothing would satisfy Worms but the blood of Luther. He saw that his fate was sealed and a most decided and yet secret effort must be made to rescue him from the jaws of the lion. As soon as Luther left Worms an edict was procured against him to which was affixed the emperor's signature and the seal of the empire. See ("Words that shook the world" 240 pages). The emperor himself had spoken and the Diet had ratified the decree. The whole body of Romanist who had no desire for light, who loved darkness and the practise of iniquity rather than God's word which enjoined purity and holiness of character, rejoiced greatly at this excommunication. The tragedy they thought was over. The reformation stood in great peril and the superstitious heard the name of Luther spoken with horror, associating him with Satan incarnate whom the emperor had pointed out as Luther clothed with a monk's habit. Now was the time for the elector to act.



Most of the original drafts of Ellen White's books are no longer in existence. But a manuscript of 51 pages dealing with Luther's kidnapping and seclusion at the castle of Wartburg has been preserved. A page of this manuscript is reproduced at the left, with a line-for-line transcription. On the reverse side of the manuscript sheets appear portions of a hat catalog printed by the Pacific Press, a sample of which has also been reproduced. Below is a letter Ellen White wrote to her children, here shown so that the contrast in penmanship between it and the manuscript can be seen. The Luther manuscript was written as fast as Mrs. Ellen White's pen could cross the page. The letter demonstrates greater care in format. Manuscript pages such as the one shown here would be turned over to a literary assistant, who was instructed to correct spelling, punctuation, et cetera.

1885
Dear children, 25
Sister Sarah and I left B.C. Tuesday last
just two o'clock, we arrived in San
Francisco at eight o'clock. The weather
part of the journey was more trying and
harmful to us than the long journey from
Ottawa. It was very cold and the cars much crowded
and it was very warm. But I felt good
courage I had no fret in me I felt thankful
for peace of mind and communion with
my Savior the entire journey. Under his
guardianship I know I was safe and had
no reason for complaint therefore I did not
feel half as much weary as I otherwise
would have done. I spoke six times in
Battle Creek. It will do good I know it will
for the Lord helped me. I had a long talk
with Bro. Bell I told him many things I need
to place before him which every man of our
leading men had made a mistake and hindered

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not all others reflection as about God and our Lord
bitterness in condemnation of others—messing, the heads
of the nations as the shadow of death already lies
with whom you can yet be numbered. See Jesus in his heart
Jesus Christ Green hills pass be brought out condemned
He did not complain and murmur at his lot. He had not
preached Christ in vain himself had tasted the powers of the
world to come and be now in his last hours enjoyed a feast
of heavenly peace and love. In his prison he was cheered with the
prophetic glimpse of the dawn of better days that would certainly
open upon the church of God on earth and he felt his own life bound
more in death he said for the church once in his death he seemed
to have thought he was again in prison when Christ
of Bethlehem Environs priests were to offer the figures of Jesus
Christ which he had painted upon its walls. Jesus said with
sorrow. But now that these come to wash also restore other
portraits. Most nobly, obliterates portraits so that the Good News / continue
them before now said these artists let the bishops come
forth. Let them efface these if they can and the world has failed
with joy. Occupying your thoughts with your defense rather than
with no man said John Chlum to whom he had told his dream
and said John Chlum to whom he had told this to his
son. We separated. John I pray believe that this life of God
which I engraved in others hearts of Bethlehem when I preached
his word will not be effaced and that after I have ceased to live it will
be still better shown forth. by mightier preachers to the great
and the mighty preachers to the great.

Pressed for time in drafting materials to enlarge the presentation on Huss and Jerome, Ellen White wrote hastily, her hand unable to keep up with the words she wished to employ. Under such circumstances words in the rough draft of a writing may be reduced to a type of shorthand, it's not dotted, it's not crossed, and some words not completely finished. With Ellen White, the often-used "they" might appear as "thy." Words with endings of "ing" or "ion" might end in a wavy line. Context left no question as to the intent of the author. This material was reduced to fit available space, and final editing greatly condensed the text—a text fully approved by Ellen White. Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling have been corrected in the transcript.

quence. For example, she once wrote, " 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' the apostle Peter declared."—REVIEW AND HERALD, October 30, 1913. She should, of course, have said "Paul" instead of "Peter." In giving the account of the St. Bartholomew Massacre in France (see *The Great Controversy*, pp. 272, 273), in her first writing published in 1888, she declared that the ringing of the bell of the palace was the "signal for the slaughter." When she later learned that historians differed, some saying the "palace bell," and some saying "the church bell of St. Germain" across the street, and some the "palace of justice" around the corner, she modified the wording in 1911 to read, "A bell tolling at dead of night, was a signal for the slaughter."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 272. It was not her intention to attempt to settle fine points of difference among historians. On this her son, W. C. White, wrote: "When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way."—W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, Nov. 4, 1912. Quoted in *The Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 34.

Up to this point we have been considering Ellen White's sources for the Conflict books and particularly *The Great Controversy*. We have seen how God repeatedly opened up to her in vision the great controversy

Line for line transcript

[What, John Huss, have you] not one murmuring reflection against God, not one word of bitterness in condemnation of your enemies—the heads of the nations as the shadow of death already has fallen upon you? Yet he manifested the spirit of his Master Jesus Christ when he was betrayed and condemned. He did not complain and murmur at his lot. He had not preached Christ in vain himself, had tasted the powers of the world to come and he now in his last hours enjoyed a feast of heavenly peace and love. In his prison he was cheered with the prophetic glimpse of the dawn of better days that would certainly open upon the church of God on earth, and he felt the loss of his own life would indeed be seed for the church. Once in his sleep he thought he was again in his own beloved Chapel of Bethlehem. Envious priests were trying to efface the figures of Jesus Christ which he had painted upon its walls. He was filled with sorrow. But next day there came painters who restored the partially obliterated portraits so that they were more brilliant than before. Now, said these artists, let the bishops come forth; let them efface these if they can, and the crowd was filled with joy. Occupy your thoughts with your defense rather than with visions, said John Chlum, to whom he had told his dream. And yet replied Huss, I firmly hope that this life of Christ which I engraved in men's hearts at Bethlehem when I preached his word will not be effaced and that after I have ceased to live it will [be still better shown forth.] by mightier preachers to the great [satisfaction of the people, and to my own most sincere joy, when I shall be again permitted to announce his Gospel, that is when I shall arise from the dead.]

story and how she labored to trace the picture on the background of the history of the past. But the real message of these books is what they mean to the future—the final outworking of God's plans and purposes.

In the last half of *The Great Controversy*, the volume climaxing the series, we find God's chosen servants proclaiming the return of our Lord, and we follow the history of God's remnant church from its inception in the dark hours of disappointment to its glorious triumph, finally witnessing the coming of the Lord and the rewarding of all who are faithful. It is a moving story, filled with vital information and divine guidance for the people living in earth's last days.

Contain instruction God has given

"The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind," she wrote of *The Great Controversy*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and *The Desire of Ages*, "as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone."—*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 126.

She also said: "Sister White is not the originator of these books. They contain the instruction that during her lifework God has been giving her. They contain the precious, comforting light that God has graciously given His servant to be given to the world. From their pages this light is to shine into the hearts of men and women, leading them to the Saviour."—*Ibid.*, p. 125. □

Writing on the life of Christ

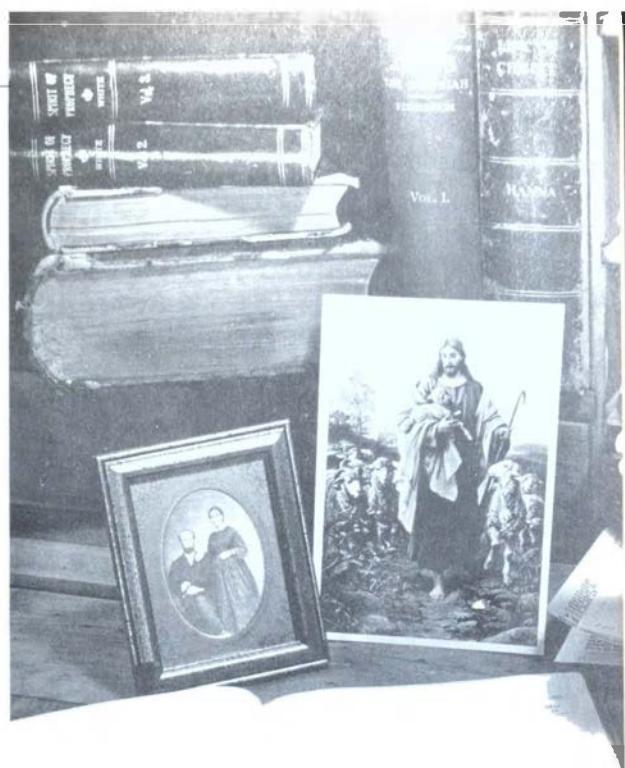
Overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task of writing on the life of Christ, Ellen White felt keenly her lack of skills. She said, "I will try, if the Lord will help me, at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science [of writing]."

After the publication of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1, in 1870, James and Ellen White turned their attention to a second, 400-page book. This one would deal with New Testament history, the life of Christ, and the work of the apostles. A third volume, also of 400 pages, would deal with post-Biblical history, continuing down to the end of time.

January 1, 1873, found James and Ellen White on the West Coast, where Ellen White began her writing on the life of Christ. In meetings over the next weekend, held in the Baptist church in Petaluma, she spoke Sunday morning on the temptation of Christ in the wilderness and felt the "force of the subject."

However, because at this time her husband, who had encouraged her in her writing and who often assisted her in preparing materials for the press, was ill from protracted periods of overwork, she decided a week later to face the situation candidly. Until she acquired the skills she felt she needed, she would discontinue her writing on the life of Christ. At the present time how could she deal with such great and sublime themes? "I am thinking," she wrote in her diary, "I must lay aside my writing I have taken so much pleasure in, and see if I cannot become a scholar. I am not a grammarian. I will try, if the Lord will help me, at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science [of writing]. God will help me," she declared. "I believe He will."—Manuscript 3, 1873, p. 5.

With formal schooling of only three years, she ever felt her inadequacy in writing. Not long before this she urged upon her children the importance of learning to be good writers (Letter 28, 1871). Her books, her articles, and her letters and manuscripts reveal that from the very



beginning of her literary work, her writing was clear and forceful, and her messages carried a distinctive style. A reading of *Early Writings*, written in the earlier years, reveals a modest vocabulary and a simple sentence structure. Later books and articles disclose a development in literary skills. This came about as she helped her husband correct proof sheets for the *Review and Herald* and the other publications, as she read, and as she mixed with people day by day at home and in her travels. Constantly, as do most writers, she turned subjects over in her mind and endeavored to find the best, most convincing manner to express truth.

Already several articles had appeared in the *Review*, beginning with December, 1872, introducing "The First Advent of Christ." Fortunately, although feeling her inadequacy, she did not give in to her feelings, but intermittently during the next few years she wrote and

Oakland Cal. April 21 1876
Dear Husband

Mary has just been reading to me two articles one on the loaves and fishes Christ walking on the water and status ^{to his} ~~to his~~ ^{years} the bread of life which caused all his disciples to turn from him. This takes fifty pages and even many ^{more} subjects ^{most} I do think of the precious Master I have ever written Mary is just enthusiastic over it. She thinks it is of the highest value. I am perfectly satisfied with the other article I was upon blunt going through the corn field plucking the ears of corn and healing the scattered hand 12 pages. If I can with Marys help get out these subjects of such intense interest, I should

In this letter to her husband, Ellen White reports her progress in working on the life of Christ, mentioning chapters on the "loaves and fishes." The first and last pages of the six-and-one-half-page letter are reproduced here. Notice her signature.

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go forward in faith and hope I will do the same. If Gods blessing rests upon us we can but be happy.

In much love and hope Ellen W.

published articles on the life and teachings of Jesus. These closed in April, 1875, with a series on "The Temptation of Christ."

A year later, circumstances were more favorable for writing. Ellen White was again on the Pacific Coast in her new home in Oakland, California. She had good literary help in her niece, Mary Clough, a talented young woman, the daughter of her sister Caroline. Mary was an earnest Christian, but had not accepted the seventh-day Sabbath. James White was in the East, attending the General Conference session and caring for other duties as General Conference president. Seeing an opportunity to get on with her writing on the life of Christ, Ellen White determined that unless the Lord directed her otherwise, she would concentrate on this project.

Late in March, she wrote her husband: "Mary Clough and I will do all we can to forward the work of my writings. I cannot see any light shining to Michigan for me. This year I feel that my work is writing."—Letter 63, 1876.

"I enjoy the presence of God," she assured James. "I am writing and having freedom in my writing. Precious subjects I am handling. The last I completed . . . [was the story of] Jesus healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda."—Letter 1, 1876.

The first drafts of her materials were in Ellen White's own handwriting. Mary would edit the pages carefully, and put them into the form of a chapter. Of course, the finished work was also in handwritten form, for it was six or seven years before typewriters came into use in Mrs. White's work. Every morning she would write diligently in her upstairs room. After dinner, she would go to Mary Clough's room, lie on a sofa, and listen as Mary read the material prepared from her handwritten manuscript. She would rest or ride out in the carriage in the afternoon, perhaps pen a few letters, and then again in the evening go to Mary's room to hear more. Because the two women worked so closely together, Mrs. White even spoke of the writing "we" are doing, meaning the work she and Mary were doing together. Some years later she explained the use of the term "we": "My helpers and I are co-workers in sending out the light given me to be a blessing to the world."—Letter 170, 1906.

Confident in both human and divine help

Mrs. White felt perfectly confident in both her human and her divine help: "The precious subjects open to my mind well," she wrote in early April (Letter 4, 1876).

As the two women worked together with dedicated purpose, it seems they had at hand for reference several standard works by other authors, such as William Hanna's *Life of Christ*, the *Life and Work of Christ*, by Cunningham Geikie, and possibly others. The finished product as published gives evidence that they made some use of Hanna's *Life of Christ*.

One day Ellen White reported to her husband: "Mary has just been reading to me two articles—one on the loaves and fishes, [another on] Christ walking on the

water. . . . This takes fifty pages and comprises many subjects. I do think it the most precious matter I have ever written. Mary is just as enthusiastic over it. She thinks it is of the highest value. . . .

"Interesting subjects are continually opening to my mind. These subjects I speak upon which fastens them in Mary's mind."—Letter 13, 1876. (See illustration on opposite page.)

And, indeed, Mrs. White's public speaking during this period was also a part of the revelatory process. While working on the chapter on the feeding of the 5,000, she spoke to a large local congregation, taking up, she said, "the subject of the loaves and fishes. . . . They all listened with wide open eyes," she reported, "and some [with] open mouths."—Letter 9, 1876.

Writing to Lucinda Hall, she declared: "I have a special work at this time to write out the things which *the Lord has shown me*. . . . I have a work to do which has been a great burden to my soul. How great, no one but the Lord knows.

"Again, I want time to have my mind calm and composed. I want to have time to meditate and pray while engaged in this work. . . . This is a great work, and I feel like crying to God every day for His Spirit to help me to do this work all right."—Letter 59, 1876. (Italics supplied.)

Bible study, visions, prayer, meditation, discussion with her literary assistant, even "hard thinking," all under the general superintendence of the Holy Spirit, were involved in the writing. "I feel great peace and calmness of mind," she noted. "There seems to be nothing to confuse and distract my mind, and with so much hard thinking my mind could not be perplexed with anything without being overtaxed."—Letter 13, 1876.

"I cannot rush business," she wrote. "This work must be done carefully, slowly, and accurately. The subjects we have prepared are well gotten up. They please me."—Letter 14, 1876.

When, by the end of May, 1876, Mrs. White's work on volume 2 of *The Spirit of Prophecy*,* carrying the account to the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, was largely finished, she left California for camp meetings in the East. By the end of November the book was published, but for some reason it carried a publication date of 1877.

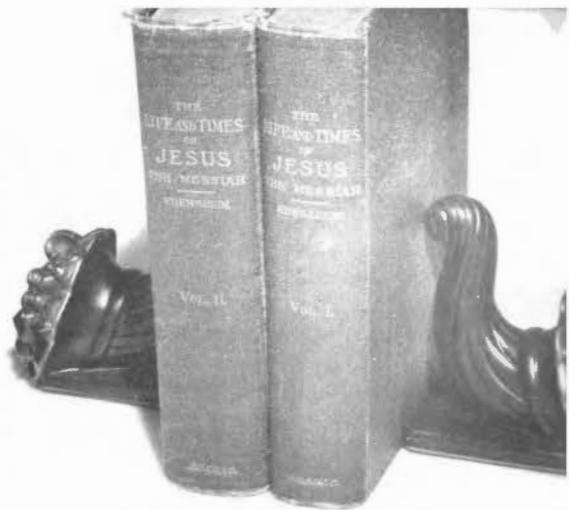
By way of demonstration, let us look at the chapter on the loaves and the fishes as published in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, pp. 258-267, comparing the account with the Gospel writers and with Hanna's *Life of Christ*. To Ellen White the Bible was a basic source book.

All four of the Gospels report the experience of feeding the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-23; Mark 6:32-46; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13). These inspired accounts Ellen White had before her, as have all who have written on Christ's life. She began her narrative with the place of retirement where the event took place—a suitable place

* Available in facsimile reprint from Adventist Book Centers.



As Ellen White wrote on the life of Christ, she made use of such works as *The Life of Christ*, by William Hanna, and *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by Alfred Ederheim. Her personal copies, pictured above, include her signature on the flyleaf, as shown on the Hanna volume.



"for such retirement beyond the sea from Capernaum" (*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 258). Hanna's description may have enriched the Ellen White account, for, as does Matthew, he writes of "a desert place" and adds that it was "over against Capernaum, across the lake, in the district running up northward to Bethsaida" (*The Life of Christ*, p. 277).

Both Hanna and Ellen White point out two reasons for Christ's command to the disciples recorded by Luke—"Make them sit down by fifties in a company" (Luke 9:14). Mark says, "They sat down in ranks, by

More important than the similarities are the points of differences in the two manuscripts. These clearly demonstrate nondependence.

hundreds, and by fifties" (chap. 6:40). Hanna says the order was "indicative of our Lord's design that there might [be] no confusion and that the attention of all might be directed to what he was about to do."—*Ibid.*, p. 279.

Ellen White mentions the same point: "to preserve order, that all might witness the miracle He was about to do" (*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 262).

Both Hanna and Ellen White write of the threat of "violence" which might follow attempts to make Christ king:

Hanna wrote of the apparent intention of the people to "take him at once, and force him to be their king. Jesus sees the incipient action of that leaven which, if allowed to work, would lead on to some act of violence."—*The Life of Christ*, p. 280.

Ellen White said, "He knows that violence and insurrection would be the result of His exaltation as Israel's king."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 264.

What is reported could possibly be inferred from John 6:15, but there may be a connection with the account in Hanna's book.

Hanna says, "He calls the twelve to him, and directs them to embark immediately, . . . to row back to Capernaum, where, in the course of the night or the next morning, he might join them."—*The Life of Christ*, p. 280.

Ellen White reports: "He calls His disciples to Him and directs them to immediately take the boat and return to Capernaum, leaving Him to dismiss the people. He promises to meet them that night or on the following morning. The disciples are loth to submit to this arrangement."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 264.

Similarities in the written accounts of minor points not mentioned, but possibly implied, by the Gospel writers, occur here and there in the two works. In the case of a promise to meet the disciples, either that night or the next morning, we might observe that Hanna made this as a logical assumption, possibly based on Mark 6:45. Ellen White may have based her statement on Scripture implication, on information given her in vision, or on Hanna's assumption. The evidence available precludes any dogmatic conclusion.

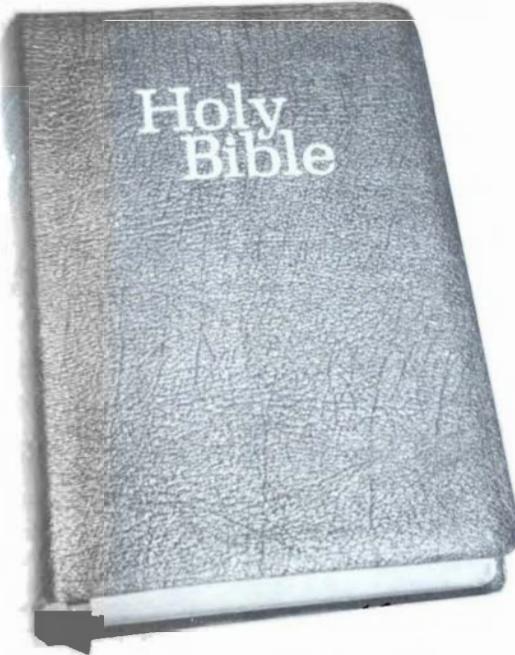
Points unique to Ellen White

More important than the similarities are the points of differences in the two manuscripts. These clearly demonstrate nondependence.

On the trip across the lake to the "desert place," Ellen White informs us that "others followed Him over the water in boats."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 259. Neither the Gospel writers nor Hanna mentions this point.

In *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, on pages 259 and 260, Ellen White describes some of the work of the day: "Hundreds of the sick and maimed had been brought for Jesus to relieve, and were disposed upon the ground in positions favorable to arrest His attention. . . . All maladies were represented among the sick who claimed His notice. Some were burning with fever and unconscious of the anxious friends that ministered to them. There were the deaf, the blind, the palsied, the lame, and lunatic. . . .

"His discourse was often interrupted by the delirious ravings of some fever-stricken sufferer, or the piercing shriek of the insane, whose friends were trying to press through the crowd and bear the afflicted to the Healer. The voice of wisdom was also often lost in shouts of triumph as the victims of hopeless disease were instantly restored to health and strength."



One of Ellen White's special sources was the Bible, with its inspired accounts of the life and teachings of Christ and the glimpses it gives of the controversy from its beginning.

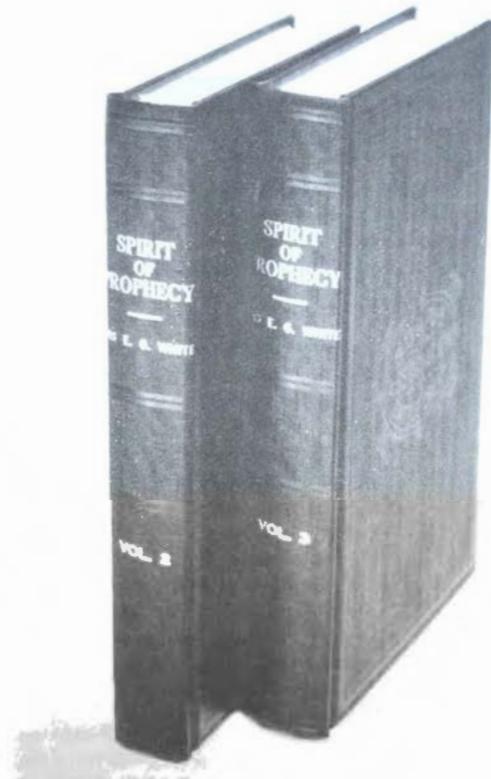
Hanna here merely mentions the healing of the sick. But there is a significant detail mentioned by Ellen White that neither Hanna nor other writers on the life of Christ mention. This is the description in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, of the attempt of the disciples to save Christ from exhaustion: "The Master had labored through all that time without food or repose, and the disciples, seeing Him pale with weariness and hunger, besought Him to rest from His toil and take some refreshment. Their entreaties being of no avail, they consulted together as to the propriety of forcibly removing Him from the eager multitude, fearing that He would die of fatigue.

"Peter and John each took an arm of their blessed Master and kindly endeavored to draw Him away. But He refused to be removed from the place. His work was imperative; every applicant for His mercy felt his own case to be the most urgent. The crowd press about the Saviour; they sway Him hither and thither. In their

efforts to more nearly approach Him, they trample upon each other."—Pages 260, 261.

Here is specific, detailed information not mentioned by either the Gospel writers or Hanna. It illustrates the point, that whether Ellen White gained factual and descriptive information of one kind or another from Hanna, Geikie, and others, her vision source gave her information of which other writers on the life of Christ were unaware. Such descriptions have a ring of authenticity that could be given only by an eyewitness. Her writing is rich with fresh new items and deals with the lessons and spiritual matters as no others do.

Both volume 2 of *The Spirit of Prophecy* series we have been dealing with, and volume 3, published in 1878, which fills out the life of Christ, were issued under the general title *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*. One carried a subtitle of "Life, Teachings and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ," and the other "The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Shortly thereafter the major part of the materials was divided and issued as six pamphlets. It was also published as a single volume in some of the European languages such as German, French, Danish, and Swedish under the title of *The Life of Christ*. □



These volumes carrying the title of "Great Controversy" presented the E. G. White account of Christ's life and ministry.

Preparing “THE DESIRE OF AGES”

Literary assistants played an important role in preparing the Conflict Series, but the books remained the product of Ellen White's mind guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Desire of Ages is acclaimed by many as the crowning literary production of Ellen White's pen, because of its style, language, and spiritual power. She herself disclosed the principal reasons for this when she declared in 1895: “You know that my whole theme both in the pulpit and in private, by voice and pen, is the life of Christ.”—Letter 41, 1895.

Ever striving for excellence in speaking and writing on the sublime themes of the life and ministry of our Saviour was bound to result in paramount work.

Diligent work on the manuscript for *The Desire of Ages* stretched over a period of six years, 1892-1897. The book followed naturally the publication of *The Great Controversy* in 1888 and *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1890. But not until Ellen White moved to Australia was she able to find time for more than the barest attempt on this large literary project, a project that would yield not only *The Desire of Ages* but *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* and *Christ's Object Lessons*, as well.

Work on this book did not call for writing of completely new manuscripts, beginning with chapter one and running through to the end, but a work of bringing together, enlarging, and amplifying that which had gone before in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, periodical articles, manuscripts, and letters. It would have been an unpardonable misuse of resources to have ignored the extensive writing done by Ellen White up to this time on the life and ministry of Jesus.

But, with her many responsibilities, including travel, speaking appointments, counseling, and the constant writing of testimonies, Ellen White had little time to bring together and arrange existing materials to form the basic pattern of the enlarged work on the life of Christ. This was largely a clerical task another could perform. This responsibility she placed upon Marian Davis, who



The Granville home near Sydney, Australia, where Ellen White and her staff worked from June, 1894, through 1895 preparing *The Desire of Ages* manuscript.

since 1879 had been one of her literary assistants. Miss Davis was an efficient, dedicated worker. In 1900 Mrs. White wrote of Marian: “She is my book-maker. . . .

“How are my books made? . . . She [Marian] does her work in this way. She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.

“The books are not Marian's productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do.”—Letter 61a, 1900.

In the preparation of *The Desire of Ages*, after selections from the published materials relating to a particular phase of the Saviour's ministry were assembled, and selections from unpublished manuscripts were added, both Ellen White and Miss Davis gave diligent study as to how well what had been written covered the subject and how much Ellen White still wished to add.

Then as the work progressed, each doing her part, Miss Davis would search the writings for additional material, and Ellen White would fill in the gaps. In this way the chapters were rounded out. But Ellen White alone performed the task of filling in to complete the text. She made mention of this at the death of Marian Davis in 1904, when her mind turned back to their labors together. “We have stood side by side in the work, and in perfect harmony in that work. And when she would be gathering up the precious jots and tittles that had come in

papers and books and present it to me, 'Now,' she would say, 'there is something wanted [lacking]. I can not supply it.'

"I would look it over, and in one moment I could trace the line right out. We worked together, just worked together in perfect harmony all the time."—Manuscript 95, 1904.

Miss Davis gives us a glimpse of her task early in the work as she pleaded that relevant materials be copied out from various sources, so they would be more readily available: "Perhaps you can imagine the difficulties of trying to bring together points relating to any subject, when these must be gleaned from thirty scrapbooks, a half dozen bound [E. G. White] volumes, and fifty manuscripts, all covering thousands of pages."—Marian Davis to W. C. White, March 29, 1893.

Some time earlier in their work together Ellen White had felt that Marian needed to be a little less dependent in certain phases of her work. It seems that she wanted Ellen White and her son, W. C. White, to see "every little change of a word" that she made. "Her mind," Ellen White declared, "is on every point and the connections," so she had a little talk with Marian, and explained that "she must settle many things herself," that "she must carry some of these things that belong to her part of the work" (Letter 64a, 1889).

A course on the life of Christ

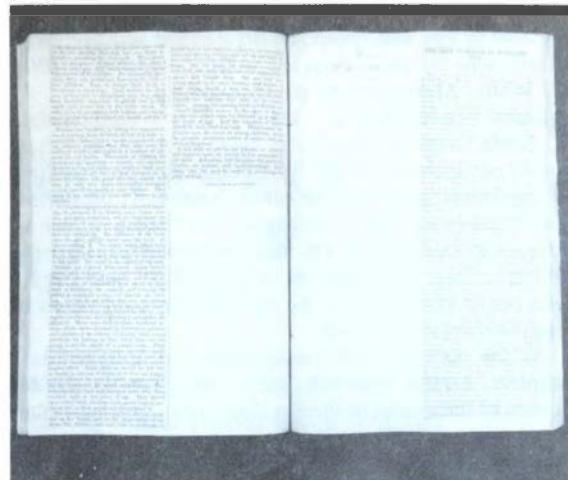
In 1893 the newly opened Bible training school, not far from the Belden home in Melbourne, Australia, where Miss Davis was rooming, offered a course in the life of Christ. Eager to get all the background help she could for her task on the E. G. White manuscript on Christ's life, she enrolled in early 1893.

She wrote to Ellen White, who was spending most of the year in New Zealand, "The Bible class coming in the middle of the forenoon is rather inconvenient, but while the life of Christ is studied, I can't afford to lose it." And she added, "It is the only thing I have bearing on my work, and it wakes one's mind up, to hear the matter talked over."—Marian Davis to Ellen G. White, October 18, 1893.

The interchange of correspondence during this year showed the concern of each of the two women as they made progress in the preparation of the manuscript. In July Ellen White reported, "I write some every day on the life of Christ."—Letter 132, 1893.

Addressing Mrs. White in early August, Marian Davis wrote, "Now about the book. I am so glad you are writing on the two journeys to Galilee. I was so afraid you would not bring that out. . . . I shall watch with great interest for the arrival of the promised manuscript. . . . There is such a rich field in the teachings of Christ after He left Jerusalem."—Marian Davis to Ellen G. White, Aug. 2, 1893.

Some time earlier, prompted possibly by her attending the class, Marian Davis suggested some topics she thought she would like to see represented in the book.



In preparing her books Ellen White would also draw from her articles that had already appeared in journals. One of her helpers, Marian Davis, kept scrapbooks similar to the one pictured here, containing Ellen White's 1885 *Review* articles that dealt with the life of Christ.

Ellen White did not see the real need, and declared, "These I shall not enter upon without the Lord's Spirit seems to lead me." She continued: "The building a tower, the war of kings, these things do not burden my mind, but the subjects of the life of Christ, His character representing the Father, the parables essential for us all to understand and practise the lessons contained in them, I shall dwell upon."—Letter 131, 1893.

When Ellen White returned from New Zealand to her Melbourne home she referred to the book in preparation in a letter to the president of the General Conference in 1894, bemoaning:

"If I could only feel to give my whole attention to the work. . . . And now I think, as I have thought a few hundred times, I shall be able after this [American] mail closes to take the life of Christ and go ahead with it, if the Lord will."—Letter 55, 1894.

But perhaps of greater concern to her was the importance of an adequate portrayal of Christ's life and ministry. As she undertook work on the manuscript soon after her arrival in Australia, she wrote: "This week I have been enabled to commence writing on the life of Christ. Oh how inefficient, how incapable I am of expressing the things which burn my soul in reference to the mission of Christ! I have hardly dared to enter upon the work. There is so much to it all. And what shall I say, and what shall I leave unsaid? I lay awake nights pleading with the Lord for the Holy Spirit to come upon me, to abide upon me."—Letter 40, 1892.

Disclosing her heart feelings she continued: "I walk with trembling before God. I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subjects of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear lest I shall

belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words. I bow my soul in awe and reverence before God and say, Who is sufficient for these things?"—*Ibid.*, quoted in *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 59.

Some months later, in a letter written to the president of Battle Creek College, she made a statement others would not agree with, but which expressed her feelings: "Now I must leave this subject so imperfectly presented, that I fear you will misinterpret that which I feel so anxious to make plain. Oh that God would quicken the understanding, for I am but a poor writer, and cannot with pen or voice express the great and deep mysteries of God."—Letter 67, 1894.

As the materials were assembled and arranged into chapters, careful attention had to be given to the sequence of the events in the Saviour's life. To what extent and in what detail visions provided the sequence in ministry and miracles in Christ's life and work is not known to us. We do know that a decade earlier she made a significant request: "Tell Mary to find me some histories of the Bible that would give me the order of events."—Letter 38, 1885. The reason for this is that she could find nothing in the publishing house library in Basel, Switzerland.

Marian had a mass of material before her on one phase or another of Christ's life, and in the main it was her task to put the materials into proper sequence. The Gospel writers in their accounts did not help her much. In the absence of direct instruction from Ellen White, or clues in the materials themselves, Miss Davis consulted carefully prepared harmonies of the Gospels.

As the work was nearing completion, Marian, working on the three introductory chapters, "'God With Us,'" "'The Chosen People,'" and "'The Fullness of the Time,'" sought the counsel of Elder Herbert Camden Lacey, Bible teacher at the Avondale School, concerning the arrangement of the paragraphs. He made some helpful suggestions on this line, which, when it became known, gave birth to rumors that Lacey had a prominent role in authoring the book. In oral and written statements Elder Lacey flatly denied this rumor. One such statement explaining his involvement in the preparation of *The Desire of Ages* reads: "Miss Marian Davis, who was entrusted with the preparation of 'Desire of Ages,' frequently came to me in 1895 and 1896 asking help in the arrangement of the material which she gathered from Sister White's various manuscripts. Sister Davis was a warm personal friend of mine, and I did the best I knew how to aid her, especially in the first chapter. As I recall it, this help was only in the arrangement of the sentences, or paragraphs, or the choice of a more suitable word. Never at any time, was there any alteration of the thought, or the insertion of an idea that was not already expressed in the original text. The resultant 'copy' was

always submitted to Sister White herself for final approval.

"The entire 'Desire of Ages' as it is now printed is, therefore, I hold, the product of Sister White's mind and heart, guided by the good Spirit of God. And the 'editing' was merely technical.

"I gladly and with all my heart accept the 'Desire of Ages' as an inspired book; indeed I regard it as the most spiritual Life of Christ, outside the Gospels, ever given to His Church."—H. C. Lacey to S. Kaplan, July 24, 1936, White Estate Document File 508.

Titles for books and chapters

Ellen White did not choose the titles for her books, except possibly those for *The Great Controversy* and the *Testimonies*. This usually was a matter of collaboration between Ellen White, her literary assistants, and her publishers. In this case, the publishers suggested two possible titles, "'The Desire of All Nations,'" and "'The Desire of Ages,'" both based on Haggai 2:7, "'The desire of all nations shall come.'" "'The Desire of Ages'" was favored.

As to chapter titles, these came rather naturally as the material was prepared, being representative of the subject matter. The Bible narrative naturally suggests some, but there is some paralleling with chapter titles used by others in writing on Christ's life. Selection would be based on appropriateness and reader appeal.

As she pushed ahead in preparing *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White was not ignorant of the help certain narratives on the life of Christ and works depicting Bible geography and customs could be to her in the descriptive part of her writing. William Hanna's *Life of Christ*, to which reference had been made in 1876, and Cunningham Geikie's *Life and Work of Christ* were in her library, and no doubt others. At various times she and her son, W. C. White, demonstrated their acquaintance with such works. Thus, for instance, just as she left Oakland for Battle Creek in 1876, apparently anticipating that she would be finishing *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, and would be continuing on volume 3, she selected books to be sent to her. On the train she wrote a note home: "'You need not send [Daniel March's] *Walks and Homes of Jesus* when you send the books I laid out.'"—Letter 27a, 1876.

While in Europe in 1887, W. C. White recommended to the publishing house there that they purchase William Hanna's *Life of Christ*, Geikie's *Hours With the Bible*, S. J. Andrews' *Life of Our Lord*, and Edersheim's works on the Temple and its services and Jewish social life. He also advised them to secure a good harmony of the Gospels.

All of these books on the life of Christ were quite well known in Adventist circles. □

Completing the work on “The Desire of Ages”—1

Because the works of Hanna and certain others dealt with the scenes that had passed before her in vision, Ellen White found these sources helpful. But these materials did not constitute the basic sources for her information on Christ's life and teaching.

To Ellen White the preparation of *The Desire of Ages* was an awesome challenge. The scenes were so sublime, the sacrifice was so great, that depicting the story took hold of every fiber of her being. Of this she wrote: "In writing upon the Life of Christ I am deeply wrought upon. I forget to breathe as I should. I cannot endure the intensity of feeling that comes over me as I think of what Christ has suffered in our world."—Manuscript 70, 1897.

Day and night, as she labored on this task, she sensed the tremendous responsibility of capturing and presenting in an effective way and in adequate language the vivid scenes and important lessons of Christ's life and ministry.

Some years earlier she had written of how "the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus" had passed before her "point by point" (Letter 14, 1889). Taking up work on *The Desire of Ages* in 1892, she mentioned that, as she wrote, the subjects stood before her in "living power" (Letter 40, 1892).

Most likely what she wrote in 1911 of her work on the preparation of the manuscript for *The Great Controversy* was also true of *The Desire of Ages*: "I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many times the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind."—Letter 56, 1911.

It seems clear that the visions given down through the years in which the life of Christ was portrayed and the visions repeated while she was working on the manu-

script for *The Desire of Ages* and visions opening up fresh concepts all came into play as basic sources of her writing on the life of Christ.

Was Ellen White dependent upon other authors?

As she was preparing *The Desire of Ages* in the 1890's, apparently at times she consulted the standard works on the life of Christ, some of which were in her library. However, it is obvious that these materials did not constitute the basic source of her information on Christ's life and teaching, or of the deeper insights, or of many of the deeply spiritual lessons she drew from the teachings of Christ. Nevertheless she found the works of Hanna, Edersheim, Farrar, Geikie, and certain others that dealt with the scenes that had passed before her in vision helpful. In them she may have found a graphic way of presenting truth, but this does not mean that such was her basic source. Her insights and spiritual lessons frequently go far beyond the presentations in these writings.

In last week's article I showed the similarities and differences between certain expressions employed by Hanna and by Ellen White as she wrote in 1876 on the feeding of the five thousand. It is quite clear that 20 years later, as she worked on the same subject for *The Desire of Ages* presentation, she again found in Hanna

Next page: One of the edited pages of *The Desire of Ages* manuscript is shown in the form in which it was sent to the publisher, The Pacific Press, in Oakland, California. The editorial marks, made in Ellen White's office in Australia, carried Mrs. White's full approval.

Passow - 7.

Returning to Jerusalem, they pursued their search. The next day they entered again the temple, their attention ¹ ~~was~~ ² arrested by a familiar voice. They could not mistake it. No other voice was like his, so profound and eloquent, so full of energy.

In the school of the rabbis they found Jesus, ~~the master of~~
~~the nation and doctors of the law.~~ He grieved as they were, they could
not forget their grief and anxiety, ~~and~~ when he was alone with them,
the father said, in words that implied a rebuke, "Son, why hast thou
thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrow-
ing."

"How is it that ye sought me?" answered Jesus, gently pointing to the cause of their suffering. "Wist ye not that I must be about

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At the home she called "Sunnyside," near the Avondale school in Australia, Ellen G. White completed her work on *The Desire of Ages* in early 1898.

and Geikie descriptions that were useful in setting forth the inspired picture.

Thus, for instance, Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages* states that when Christ charged the disciples to take the ship and return to Capernaum, they "had not put off immediately from the land, as Jesus directed them. They waited for a time, hoping that He would come to them. But as they saw that darkness was fast gathering, they 'entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum.' "—Pages 379, 380.

As Geikie reconstructs the story, he says, "At the first signs of tumult among the people, He had sent off the Twelve to cross the Lake again at once, to the Bethsaida near Capernaum, while He dismissed the multitudes. They had waited for Him till night fell, but, at last, as He did not come, they set off without Him."—*The Life and Words of Christ*, vol. 2, p. 188.

In connection with what followed, what does Ellen White say that the Gospel writers and narrators do not say? Let us first note what Hanna says about the evening hours Jesus spent on the mountain: "Alone He goes up into a mountain—alone He prays there. . . . Till after dawn Jesus holds secret and close fellowship with heaven. Into the privacies of those secluded hours of His devotion we presume not to intrude."—*Life of Christ*, p. 128.

Matthew says simply, "He went up into a mountain

apart to pray" (Matt. 14:23). Mark, Luke, and John add nothing.

In *The Desire of Ages*, page 379, Ellen White tells us what Hanna intimates he did not know—the burden of Christ's prayer: "When left alone, Jesus 'went up into a mountain apart to pray.' For hours He continued pleading with God. Not for Himself but for men were those prayers. He prayed for power to reveal to men the divine character of His mission, that Satan might not blind their understanding and pervert their judgment. . . . In travail and conflict of soul He prayed for His disciples. They were to be grievously tried. Their long-cherished hopes, based on a popular delusion, were to be disappointed in a most painful and humiliating manner. . . . For them the burden was heavy upon His heart, and He poured out His supplications with bitter agony and tears."

Consider another illustration. Of the Gospel writers only Mark introduces the proposition that Jesus and His disciples should retire to some quiet place to gain some rest. He writes, "He [Jesus] said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31).

Quoting Mark, Hanna tells of how "Jesus desired now a little quiet and seclusion. For Himself—that He might ponder over a death [of John the Baptist] prophetic of His own. . . . For them [the disciples] that they might have some respite from accumulated fatigue and toil. His own

purpose fixed, He invited them to join Him in its execution, saying to them, 'Come ye yourselves and rest awhile.' "—*Life of Christ*, p. 277.

While Ellen White in her 1876 writing merely mentions the invitation, in *The Desire of Ages* account she devotes a five-page chapter, titled "Come Rest Awhile," to the experience, and explains the purpose of the rest anticipated and of its meaning to us (pages 359-363).

Each of the Gospel writers devotes a few verses to the invitation, the events of the day, the feeding of the five thousand, and the dismissal of the people. Hanna devotes four and a half pages, Geikie four. In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White uses 16 pages in narrating the events and the lessons (pp. 359-379). Hers is replete with practical instruction, spiritual lessons, and counsel for the present, a great deal of which goes beyond the Bible presentation.

Another example: It has been observed that Ellen White's description of how inanimate nature, the sea, the sun, the rocks, the graves, bore witness to Christ's divinity, while the priests and rulers knew Him not as the Son of God, parallels quite closely a quotation Hanna uses from St. Gregory. But the parallel ends there. Hanna is at a loss to explain what happened to the dead who rose from the graves opened at Christ's death. He is uncertain whether they were raised when the graves were opened or later.

Not so Ellen White, who in positive terms declares: "As Christ arose, He brought from the grave a multitude

of captives. The earthquake at His death had rent open their graves, and when He arose, they came forth with Him. They were those who had been colaborers with God, and who at the cost of their lives had borne testimony to the truth. . . .

"Those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.

Thief on the cross story detailed

In dealing with the thief on the cross Hanna refers to the thief's overhearing the conversation of those about the cross as providing evidence that Jesus is the Lord, and conjectures that it would be unreasonable to suppose that the thief had not met Jesus before the crucifixion day (*Life of Christ*, p. 717).

Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages* unequivocally declares that "he had seen and heard Jesus, and had been convicted by His teaching, but he had been turned away from Him by the priests and rulers. Seeking to stifle conviction, he had plunged deeper and deeper into sin, until he was arrested, tried as a criminal, and condemned to die on the cross."—Page 749.

It may also be observed that Hanna experiences considerable difficulty in explaining just what the "paradise" is to which Christ refers when He declared, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (pp. 721, 722). He concludes that Paradise is wherever Jesus is. □



"Elmshaven," Mrs. White's home located below the St. Helena Sanitarium in northern California, 1900-1915. Mrs. White is seen in the wheelchair on the second-floor porch.

While the preparation of *The Desire of Ages*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, and *Christ's Object Lessons* completed her work on the life of Christ, her work on the controversy story was not complete. As she was able after returning to the United States, she prepared *The Acts of the Apostles* and *Prophets and Kings*, working in this home.

Completing “The Desire of Ages”—2

Regarding *The Desire of Ages* and the other Conflict books extant in 1906, Ellen White said, “The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone.”

One significant feature in books Ellen White designed for the general public is that in them, at times, she withheld interesting information that Seventh-day Adventists, with their understanding of Ellen White's work, could grasp and accept, but which non-Adventists might have difficulty accepting. Such information had often appeared in her early books and periodical articles. For example, in the 1876 book, *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, on page 260, appears the account of Peter and John each taking an arm of the Saviour to lead Him away from the multitude (see page 29). No mention of this is found in *The Desire of Ages*.

Marian Davis explains the reason for leaving out this type of information: “Since these books are sent out



Anticipating a large sale to the general public, Pacific Press first published *The Desire of Ages* in a large, well-illustrated volume of 835 pages in 1898.

without explanation as to the authority by which the author speaks, it was thought best to avoid, as far as we could, statements for which the Bible seems to furnish no proof, or which to the ordinary reader appear to contradict the Bible. Better to give the reader what they will accept and profit by than to excite criticism and questioning that will lead them to discredit the whole. . . .

“Sister White says that Christ was twice crowned with thorns, but as the Bible mentions only the second

crowning, it was thought best to omit the first, or rather to give the second instead of the first.”—Marian Davis to J. E. White, Dec. 22, 1895.

Nonetheless, *The Desire of Ages* is replete with extra-Biblical information, generally of a nature that would not prejudice the uninformed reader.

Neither Hanna nor Edersheim includes in his narrative the story of the woman taken in adultery, recorded in John 8:1-11. They apparently accepted the opinion of some scholars, who, finding the account missing in certain manuscripts, assumed that it was spurious. However, in his narrative Geikie speaks of the “trembling prisoner” (*Life and Words of Christ*, p. 297). Ellen White speaks of “the trembling victim” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 461). Geikie recounts the story, unfolding and emphasizing the legal aspects, and declares, “It was not their business, but that of her husband, to accuse her,” and he conjectures at length what Christ may have written with His finger in the sand—“most likely the very words He was presently to utter”—and shortly closes the account with the words “This incident past, . . .” (*Life and Words of Christ*, pp. 296-298).

In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White also mentions that “it was the husband's duty to take action against her,” but dwells at some length on just what Christ wrote with His finger in the dust: “There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives. The people, looking



To provide an inexpensive version for Adventist consumption, *The Desire of Ages* was published in this small single volume containing 1,042 smaller pages, in 1898.

on, saw the sudden change of expression, and pressed forward to discover what it was that they were regarding with such astonishment and shame.”—Page 461. The accusers then departed “speechless and confounded” (*ibid.*, p. 462).

While Geikie dismisses the story at this point, Ellen White informs us that for the woman “this was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to the service of God. . . . This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she repaid His forgiving mercy.”—*Ibid.*

This is followed by two paragraphs of spiritual lessons. The 1876 *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, account on page 352 dwells at length on her later life and states that “she stood sorrow-stricken at the foot of the cross.”

In dealing with the resurrection of our Lord, Hanna barely touches the event itself, linking it with a long discussion on the women coming to the tomb to anoint the Lord and finding it empty. He writes, “It is as they are communing with one another by the way, that the earth quakes, and the angel descends from heaven, and

rolls the stone back from the door of the sepulchre, and, having done this service for the embalmers, sits down upon it, waiting their approach."—*Life of Christ*, p. 780. And then he asks, "Was it then that the great event of the morning took place? . . . It is not said so. . . . The angel himself may not have witnessed the resurrection. He did not say he had."—*Ibid.*, pp. 780, 781.

Hanna then affirms, "Altogether secret, the exact time and manner of the event unnoticed and unknown was the great rising from the dead. . . . Some time between sunset of the last and sunrise of the first day of the week, the resurrection had taken place."—*Ibid.*, p. 781.

Geikie says even less, doing little more than quoting from Matthew 28:1-3.

While commenting briefly on the events, as noted in Scripture, Edersheim assumes that the stone was rolled away "after the resurrection of Christ" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, p. 632).

In his *Life of Christ* Farrar makes an allusion to the events of that morning in a singular and indirect way: "It became known then, or afterwards, that some dazzling angelic vision in white robes had terrified the keepers of the tomb, and had rolled away the stone from the tomb amid the shocks of earthquake."—Page 670.

Different and dramatic

How different is Ellen White's dramatic description of the resurrection in *The Desire of Ages* (pp. 779-787). In contrast to the tentative and inconclusive treatment of the well-accepted writers on the life of Christ, we have her vivid descriptions of the bands of good and evil angels watching over the tomb through the night; the angel descending "with the panoply of God," joining the angel at the tomb; the earthquake; the terror of the Roman soldiers; the stone removed by the angel as if it were a pebble; the command of the angel, "Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee"; Jesus coming forth in majesty and glory, the Roman soldiers who had fainted at sight of the angels and the risen Saviour, staggering as drunken men, hurrying to the city, telling the great news to everyone they met; the soldiers with blood-drained faces testifying before Caiaphas and Pilate; Caiaphas stunned, attempting to speak, moving his lips, "but they uttered no sound." It is all there in *The Desire of Ages*, as Ellen White had witnessed it in vision, point by point. How strikingly different from the "sources" she may have consulted!

Space forbids introducing other illustrations indicating that whatever use Ellen White made of Hanna or Geikie, et cetera, these did not take the place of her earliest and continued vision sources.

And as to sources, it might be well to examine the records left by the Gospel writers. As he introduces his book, Luke declares that he is a compiler of information set forth by many, and since he "had perfect understanding of all things from the very first," he felt qualified to do this (Luke 1:1-3). Ellen White informs us that "Nicodemus related to John the story of" the interview



In 1900, *The Desire of Ages* was published in two large, beautifully illustrated volumes with an aggregate of 835 pages of text for distribution to the general public.

he had by night with Jesus, "and by his pen it was recorded for the instruction of millions" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 177).

Ellen White writes with clarity, smoothness, authority, and, most of all, very feelingly, ever elevating the love, character, and triumph of Christ as a contender in the great-controversy story. She writes as one who was an onlooker, as indeed she was, as in vision the scenes passed before her. If she gained knowledge of some details of the customs of the people, and of the geographical features of the scenes she portrayed, from careful students of these matters, does this make her message less inspired? By no means. Those who hold to a dictatorial inspiration might feel that such incidental use of what another has written could not be accepted. But a more factual concept of inspiration allows for such usage without detracting from the convincing evidences of divine origin.

By mid-July, 1896, Ellen White felt that the work on the book was about completed. "The manuscript for the 'Life of Christ,'" she wrote, "is just about to be sent to America. This will be handled by the Pacific Press" (Letter 114, 1896). But it seems she was overly optimistic, as authors often are. In the case of *The Desire of Ages*, there were good reasons, for when she thought certain chapters were finished, in the night season further light would be given that led her to write more on the subject. This work of writing new material continued into 1898.

The manuscript for the book was sent piecemeal to the Pacific Press, and even after some chapters had been dispatched, her continued writing led to amplifications, and these were sent posthaste across the Pacific to the publishers.

A year before *The Desire of Ages* came from the press, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* was published, and her work on the parables—*Christ's Object Lessons*—continued for a year or two after *The Desire of*

Ages was published. Those being parts of her presentation on the life and teachings of Jesus, the same procedures were followed in preparing the manuscript as were employed in *The Desire of Ages*.

Two more books were needed to complete the narrative of the great-controversy story—*Prophets and Kings* and *The Acts of the Apostles*. These in time were ready, the work in preparation of the manuscripts being done somewhat as it had been on the large volumes prepared for the world and the church.

In this series of articles, going into the very heart of Ellen White's work in narrating the great-controversy struggle, we have told the simple story, supporting it with documentation. The series has been an interesting study of inspiration and how God's messenger did her work in depicting the conflict theme in book form. In so doing we may have raised questions in some minds. If we find our faith tested a bit by discovering new aspects of how inspired writers work, perhaps we should ask ourselves: Do we demand more of Ellen White than we demand of the Bible prophets? Or more than we are justified of demanding of any prophet?

Let us remember that "God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence." "God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite understanding will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 675, 676.

What is the weight of evidence as we read Ellen White's books? We urge all to look at the content, the message, the light and counsel they contain, the encouragement and the timely warnings and their harmony with Scripture. What have these writings meant to the church down through the years?

Looking back in 1906, Ellen White freely attributed the truths set forth in the books tracing the great-controversy story, to the workings of the Holy Spirit. She asked: "How many have read carefully *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *The Great Controversy*, and *The Desire of Ages*? I wish all to understand that my confidence in the light that God has given stands firm, because I know that the Holy Spirit's power magnified the truth and made it honorable, saying: 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' In my books, the truth is stated, barricaded by a 'Thus saith the Lord.'

"The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone, which are now in the ark, to be brought forth in that great day when sentence will be pronounced against every evil, seducing science produced by the father of lies."—Letter 90, 1906; *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 126.

Although the writing of the books on the agelong

conflict was a vital and important part of Ellen White's work, occupying her attention through most of her active life, it was by no means the principal part of her writing. Whereas the Conflict Series is embodied in 3,500 pages of text, nearly 5,000 pages are given to the nine volumes of the *Testimonies* written during the same period. Added to this are the many books of counsel, several thousand periodical articles, and hundreds of personal testimonies. We cannot here review this major part of her work as the messenger of God presenting His messages to men and women of the remnant church, laity, and institutional and church leaders.

In this broader field of writing, from which there seemed to be no respite, she was impelled to bear testimony to what was revealed to her in scores and hundreds of visions through 70 years of her ministry. In writing these messages of instruction, counsel, encouragement, and correction, she sought no human source of information and was not influenced by those about her. In all of her work we see her moving under the bidding and guidance of the Spirit of God.

A personal testimony

In writing these articles I have been candid, sincere, and open in describing how Ellen White did her work in presenting the great-controversy story to the church and the world. I have written from personal knowledge. My confidence in the heavenly source of the messages the Ellen G. White books portray has grown throughout my 50 years of intimate acquaintance with the Ellen G. White records and my work with them.

This confidence was also nurtured by the years of close association with my father, W. C. White, under whom I served in the office for nine years before his death in 1937. He in turn had assisted his mother, Ellen White, in an active way from the death of his father, James White, in 1881, until the end of Ellen White's life in 1915. No one had a better opportunity than he to observe, examine, and understand the manner in which Ellen White wrote her books, and I have implicit confidence in the reliability of his testimony. Accordingly I have quoted him in a number of instances.

With the abundance of positive evidence with which I am acquainted, and the mounting evidence that I from day to day encounter as I write a definitive biography of Ellen G. White, there is no room for anything but the strongest confidence that she was indeed the chosen messenger of the Lord, and that her messages were the counsel, instruction, and information God wanted her to impart to His remnant church. Knowing as I do the importance of a clear-cut, factual concept of the operation of inspiration, it has been a privilege to convey to readers of the REVIEW this information. I believe that these articles, intimately portraying how Ellen White wrote the Conflict of the Ages books, furnish a dimension for confidence in God's special gift to His church at a time when the great adversary is seeking to undermine such confidence. □